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## **Historical Vignettes**

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LONDON: SIDGWICK & JACKSON

# Historical Vignettes

BY  
**Bernard Capes**



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## NOTE

TEN of the following sketches are reprints from a volume, *Historical Vignettes*, published by Mr. Fisher Unwin in 1910. The remaining twelve here appear in book-form for the first time. The author's renewed thanks, for permission to reprint this fresh matter, are due to the Editor of *Truth*.



## “Dead Man’s Plack”

ELFRIDA, wife of Athelwold, the King’s favourite, and daughter and heiress to Olgar Earl of Devonshire, was a beauty of the true Hellenic complexion. To see her, for most men, was to covet ; to possess her, for the one, was to wear a crown of exquisite thorns. The orchard needs most watching when the fruit is ripe, and Elfrida hung at perpetual ripeness, maddening to parched lips without. The keeper of this garden of sweet things might hardly enjoy it for his fear of robbers. And the worst of it was that, to maintain so ravishing a possession in its perfection, no warning as to its own irresistible witchery must be so much as hinted to it, lest the blue innocence of two of the most lovely wondering eyes in the world should be impaired thereby, and self-consciousness usurp in them the place of *naïveté*. Gazing into those artless depths, if one\* had the privilege, one presently recognised in their little floating motes and shadows the souls of the many who had

drowned themselves therein. Was Elfrida conscious of the tragic secrets hidden away under those azure waters ? Her husband at least thought her the most loving, the most unsophisticated, the most trustworthy of wives ; and if the wish was very particularly the father to the thought, the thought was none the less for that sincere.

One noon the young wife sat, yawning and a little *ennuyée*, in her bower of the Thanage house by Harewood Forest in Hampshire. Athelwold was with the Court at Winchester, and time hung heavy on her hands. She leaned back in her seat, listlessly conning the crumpled figure of Daukin, the Earl's clerk or bookesman, as he squatted on his stool monotonously mouthing the Canons of Eusebius from an illuminated manuscript—the light literature of England when Dunstan was Primate. Like many ethereal women, Elfrida found a fascination in the deformed and grotesque. She petted little harsh Daukin ; and he, while he took his full sardonic change of the licence allowed him, for ever in spirit kissed the beautiful feet that trampled on his soul. So, he thought, must feel the writhing, adoring, hopeless serpent under Mary's feet in the chapel.

She broke in upon his reading, suddenly and irrelevantly.

“ Will our lord return this night, think you, Master Bookesman ? ”

The dwarf, closing the manuscript, accepted grimly the moral of his own eloquence.

“ Will a star shoot out of the east ? ” he said. “ I’ll tell thee when the night hath come and gone.”

“ Nay, say that you think he will—say it, say it ! ”

“ The King loves the Earl, lady, and thou desirkest him. Which passion shall pull the stronger ? ”

“ Do not *I* love him, thou toad ? ”

“ Well, then, pull, and in double harness ; so, belike, the King, that holds to him, shall be drawn too.”

“ I do not desire the King.”

“ God give him strength to bear it ! ”

She laughed musically : “ Insolent ! ” and so fell into thought.

“ Thou knowest, Daukin,” she said presently, “ I have never been to Court—nor desired it indeed. Of what complexion is the King ? ”

“ Hot.”

“ Is he not very young ? ”

“ He hath learned to lisp and help himself

to what he wants. The young husbands in his suite observe discretion."

"Poor husbands! O, Daukin, O waly me, how the day loiters! If my love could draw so strong, I'd e'en take the worser for the better's sake."

"Which first?"

"Peace, fool!"

"Well, the comfort is the King's heard of thee, and heard enough to satisfy him, it seems. He'll not trouble thee with a visit."

"He has not heard."

"What! Did he not use his influence with the Earl thy father to promote this match?"

"Aye, on grounds of policy and fortune. Thank Heaven I am not beautiful!"

"It listens and will record."

She sighed: "Alack a doleful day! O, I wish my lord would come!"

A bugle sounding without answered on her word. There was a thud of racing hoofs, a sudden turmoil in the court, a mingling of many voices, servile or peremptory. Elfrida rose ecstatic, clasping her hands.

"'Tis he himself!" she cried, and advancing, as the curtain parted, almost ran into the arms of her husband, Athelwold.

He was tall, sinewy, pale-haired and lashed. His tunic of fine cramoisy was torn,

his gold garters trailed ; he looked like a man in the last extreme of haste and agitation. He took the wondering beauty in his arms, and gazed into her face, searchingingly, passionately.

"Wife," he said, "I have something of wild urgency for thy ear. I must speak it ere my blood cools. Tell me that thy heart is mine ? "

"Athelwold ! What questions ! "

"Tell it, tell it ! "

"Am I not thy wife ? "

"Priests' business. I speak of love."

"Why, did I not swear to love thee ? "

"Elfrida, thy love's my heaven ; without it—hell. Hear my confession. There's no moment to lose."

"Thou strange husband ! "

"When I first saw thee in thy father's house I saw my destiny. Such immortal beauty, child—God, I was just man ! Forgive the mad cunning jealousy that would deceive thee even in thyself. 'I must possess,' I thought, 'this immortal thing or die.' I bid for thy rank, thy fortune, in pretence, the King upholding my suit. His interest turned the scale, and we were wed. Elfrida, wife, dear love—I wronged the King in all ; I was no more at first than his deputy for thy hand."

A little spot of white had come to her cheek ; but she smiled on him, not stirring.

“ How, Athelwold ? ”

“ I must confess it,” he said. “ Edgar had heard speak of this lovely Devon rose ; and, toying, only half inclined, with a thought of matrimony, sent me, on some feigned mission, to discover if the lady’s beauty really matched her nobility—in which case——”

“ Yes, Athelwold ? ”

He held her convulsively. “ O, forgive me, Elfrida, that I made thee Queen of love, not England ! Thy wealth, thy name, I told him, were the charms that gilded servile eyes—enough, perhaps, for such as I, but for him, lacking the first and best of recommendations. And he believed me, and yielded thee to me. And now, and now ”—he held her from him, his chest heaving, his voice breaking—“ my sin hath found me out—some one hath betrayed me—and he is coming in person to put my report to the proof. Feigning to prepare for his visit, I fled but in time to forestall him by a few hours. Ah, love ! all is lost unless thou lovest me.”

She answered quite softly : “ What am I to do, Athelwold ? ”

“ Do, be anything but Elfrida. Dress

slovenly, speak rudely, soil and discredit thine own perfection.”

“ Substitute another for thy lady.”

They both started, and fell apart. The dwarf, forgotten by the one, unnoticed by the other, had risen from his stool. The Thane’s hand whipped furiously to his sword-hilt.

“ Nay,” said the girl, interposing—“ Daukin is my dog ; Daukin loves me ; Daukin shall speak.”

“ Let the Thane,” said the dwarf, cool and caustic, “ seek his couch on pretence of fever, and let Alse, the cookmaid, receive the King. We be all devoted servants of our house. A little persuasion, a little guile, and the thing is carried.”

“ I will go instruct the wench,” said Elfrida hurriedly.

She seemed charmed with the idea. She drove her lord to his hiding, with a peremptory laughing injunction that he was not to issue therefrom until summoned by herself ; she refused to linger a moment by his side in her excitement. Her eyes had never looked so heavenly-bright and blue.

At eve came the King, with a little brilliant retinue.

But Alse did not receive him. Instead there advanced and knelt at his feet one of

the most radiant young beauties his eyes had ever encountered. The violet Saxon hood fell back from her face as she raised it, revealing a sun of little curls bound by a golden fillet. The slender lifted hands, the bright parted lips, most of all the eyes, blue as lazulite and wide with innocence, seemed all as if posed for a picture of Love's ecstasy. The King, young, and lustful, and handsome, with his strong, clean-cut face, stood the speechless one.

"Welcome, lord King," she said in a half-articulate voice, like a child murmuring a lesson.

He raised and kissed her. "Welcome, wife of Athelwold!" he said, and let out a sigh like a man restored from drowning.

But apart stood the dwarf, amazed and sorrowful.

"She hath deceived us," he thought. "What is to be the end?"

That night was spent in feasting; and in the morning came Elfrida to her husband's couch. Worn with fatigue and anxiety—since she had given orders that none was to approach him—he had fallen asleep at last.

"Up, up, my Thane!" she cried. "The King is bent on hunting, and awaits thee in the court. Say nothing. All goes well."

She would not linger, lest, as she whispered,

she should risk discovery ; but, running from him, sought her bower. There listening, a hand upon her bosom, she heard the chase ride forth ; and presently the dwarf stole in to her.

"Thou hast done it," he said. "The King will kill him."

She began, "Dog ! Thou darest——" but, checking herself, put her hands a moment to her face, then went up and down, up and down, like one distracted.

"Well, he wronged the King," said Daukin.

She stopped before him, and his soul struggled against the fascination of the blue waters.

"What was that to his wrong of me ?" she said passionately ; and, as he gazed, he saw the waters brim. "O, Daukin !" she wept ; "cannot *you* understand me ?"

"Yes," he said.

"And love me still ?"

"I can love the truth," he said, with a heartbroken sigh. "I have found it at last in the depths I have studied so long."

When the King returned, the sternness of his white face belied his uttered commiseration. The Thane, he told his lady, had stumbled on his own boar-spear, and met with a mortal hurt.

*pavon* were emblazoned with arms betokening his higher rank.

“Messer de Polwarth,” said the lady, “is not this in sooth Love’s paradise?”

“Certes, madam,” he answered grimly; “it is the King’s Manor of Woodstock.”

She laughed; then, stiffening suddenly in her saddle, pointed upwards.

“Look!” she said.

A poising kite, as she spoke, had dropped to the wood-edge, and thence rose swiftly with a dove beating in its talons.

“Behold a fruitful omen,” she cried, and turned on the hind: “Dog! where lies the garden?”

De Polwarth struck the fellow a stcely blow across the scruff.

“Answer, beast!”

The man, a sullen, unkempt savage, pointed with an arm like a snag.

“Down yon, a bowshot from the lodge. Boun by the waterside.”

The lady nodded, her eyes fixed in a sort of smiling trance. She was Eleanor of Aquitaine, no less, the divorced wife of France, the neglected and embittered Queen of England, and she was at this moment on the verge of flight to those rebellious sons of hers who conspired in Guienne against their father.

But, before she fled, she had just one deed of savage vengeance to perpetrate, and of that she would not be baulked, though to accomplish it she must ride across half England. Somewhere, she knew, in this place was situated that "house of wonderful working—wrought like unto a knot in a garden," where lived her hated child-rival, that beautiful frail rose of the Cliffords who had borne the King a son. So much the worse for her—so much the worse.

The Queen descended to earth, spiritually and literally. She was dressed like a queen in a belted blue robe latticed with gold, and a long purple cloak over. A jewelled coronet embraced her headcloth and the headcloth her face. The rim of hair that showed under was still, for all her fifty odd years, crow black. Her colour was high, her frame masculine; the prominence of her lower lip gave her a cruel expression, and without belying her.

"Nay, de Polwarth," she said, as the knight made a movement to dismount. "No hand in this but mine."

He retorted gruffly: "The place is reputed impenetrable."

She smiled. "Hate will find out a way. Rest you here till I return."

Never to be gainsaid, she went off alone

by the streamside, and soon disappeared among the trees beyond.

Her way took her under the slope of the hill which ran up to the King's Manor. At first, looking through the branches, she could catch glimpses of the strong, irregular pile, butting like a mountain crag from the forehead of the green height; but, in a little, the density of the trees increasing, the house was hidden from her view, and she had only the thick, towering woods and the little stream for company.

On and on she went, resolute to her purpose, thrilled with some presentiment of its near accomplishment—and suddenly a white rabbit ran out from the green almost under her feet.

She stopped dead on the instant, and, as she stood motionless, the thicket parted near the bole of a great beech-tree hard by, and a little boy slipped out into the open. He was pink-cheeked, Saxon-haired and eyed—a shapely manikin of five or so. Intent on recapturing his pet, he did not at first notice the stranger; but when he turned, with the bunny hugged in his arms, he stood rosily transfixed. In a swift stride or two the Queen was upon him, cutting off his retreat.

She stooped, with a little exultant laugh.

“ What is thy name, sweet imp ? ” she said.

He pouted, half frightened, but still essaying the man, rubbing one foot against the opposite calf.

“ Willie Clifford, madam,” he said, wondering for a moment at her crown ; but then panic overtook him.

“ Nay, Willie,” said the Queen, holding him with a hand that belied its own softness ; “ I like thy tunic of white lawn and thy pretty shoon so latched with gold. Hast a fond mother, Willie—whose name I will guess of thee for Rosamond ? And for thy father, Willie—do you see him often ? ”

“ He hath a crown like thine, but finer,” said the child ; “ and when he comes he puts it on my head.” Something in the staring face above him awoke his sudden fear. He began to struggle.

“ Let me go ! ” he cried—“ I want to go back to my minny.”

“ Thy minny ? ” said the Queen. “ One moment, child. Is that thy secret way behind the tree there ? ”

“ I will not tell thee,” cried the boy. “ I want my minny ! Let me go ! ”

With one swift movement she tore the rabbit from his arms, and, holding it aloft

with her left hand, with her right whipped a jewelled bodkin from its sheath at her waist, and stabbed the little white body, stabbed it, stabbed it. Then she flung the convulsed encrimsoned thing to the ground, and, resheathing the weapon, held the child with a stare of fury.

The swiftness, the savagery, the dreadful novelty of the act had had their purposed effect on him. His eyes widened, his throat swelled ; but the scream to which he was on the instant impelled never came. His little soul was paralysed ; he was utter slave to horror. If she had told him at that moment to lie down and go to sleep, he would have tried to obey her will, though the unuttered sobs were half bursting his bosom.

“Now,” she said, “now !” panting a little. “Seest, thou harlot’s whelp ? Cross me again, and so shalt thou be served. Wait here—move one step hence an thou darest —until I come again.”

She cast one final look of menace at him, then, stepping to the beech-tree, parted the green and disappeared.

It was a cunning blind, as she had expected. The great trunk was so packed amongst the thickets of the hillside that none would have guessed its concealment of

a scarce-discernible track which threaded the matted growths above and behind it. Mounting by this, the malign creature came suddenly upon a broken opening in the rock, so mossy and so choked with foliage that its presence would have been quite unsuspected from the glade below. She stopped ; she uttered a little gloating exclamation ; for there, looped over a projection of the stone, was the end of a strong green thread hanging out of the darkness. The clue, of which she had heard whisper with but small faith, was actually in her hand. Providence had doomed the foolish mother to permit her child to sport with the very means designed against her own destruction.

The cavity led into a ramification of passages, roughly trenched and hewn out of the calcareous slate of the hill. Occasionally roofed, mostly open, always tangled in foliage, and so cunningly devised to mislead that it had been near humanly impossible to resolve its intricacies without such guide to follow, the labyrinth led the Queen by a complicated course to a sense of approaching light and release. And then all in a moment the thread had come to an end against a stake to which it was fastened ; and there was a pleasant garden sunk in a hollow of

the hill, and a fair young woman, with an awaiting, somewhat troubled expression on her face, standing hard by. She had evidently spun the clue, and returned the first by it from the glade, to make sport for her little man.

The intruder took all in at a glance—the expectant figure, the quiet, inaccessible pleasure, the roof of a gilt pavilion rising, a long stone's-throw away, above the branches of a flowering orchard; dominating all, and hiding this lovely secret in its lap, the wooded hill crowned by its protecting keep.

The young woman, with one startled glance, turned to fly; but in the very act, staggered by a recollection, turned, and came towards the Queen, a hand pressed to her bosom. She was a frail thing, in the ethereal as well as the worldly sense—fragile, it seemed, as china, and as delicately tinted. All pink and cream, with pale golden hair, her darker eyebrows were the only definite note of colour in a thin face. Even her long robe of pale green suggested the anaemia of tulip leaves forced into premature growth.

“A weak craft to have borne so huge a sin,” said Eleanor, as the girl approached. She eyed her with malignant scorn, her

under lip projecting. "So, wanton," she said, "dost know the wife thou hast wronged?"

The other gave a little mortal start and cry "The Queen!" and could utter no more.

A small, hateful laugh answered her.

"The wife, fool! the she-wolf against whom you thought to guard your fold with straws. Why, look at you—I could peel you in my hands—a bloodless stalk, without heat or beauty!"

"Spare me!"

"Aye, as the wolf spares the lamb, the hawk the wren. Let me look on you. So this is a King's fancy. I could have wrought him better from a kitchen-scrub. Quick! I am in; I have no time to lose, and thine has come. Poison or steel—make thy choice."

"O, madam, in pity! My heart—I have been weak and ill—I shall not vex thee long!"

"God's blood! And baulk my vengeance? Come—poison—"

"O! What poison?"

"Why, that thou art betrayed—supplanted. Another leman lies in thy bed—wife to one Blewit, a willing cuckold. Drink it, thy desertion, to the dregs."

“ Sin must not beshrew sin. It is bitter to the death ; but I drink it.”

“ O, thou toad ! Thou wilt not die, for all thy stricken heart ? Will this kill thee then ? ”

She whipped out the red stiletto. Rosamond uttered a faint shriek.

“ Blood ! ”

The Queen brandished it before her eyes.

“ I met thy whelp in the glade. It was he who betrayed the way to me.”

The girl gasped and tottered forward.

“ I let him to his death. Monster, thou hast killed my Willie—my boy, my one darling ! ”

She made an effort to leap forward—swayed—and fell her full length upon the grass.

The Queen, softly replacing her blade, stood staring down. No sound or movement followed on the fall. Stooping, she gazed long and silently into the thin face, then, without a word, turned and retreated as she had come.

The boy was standing, white and tearless, by his dead rabbit as she parted the leaves and slunk forth.

“ Go to thy mother, child,” she whispered, hoarse and small. “ She is ill.”

## Maid Marian

“MASTER KAY, are you my friend?”  
“Hear me vow it, madam.”

“Alas ! what vow ? ”

“That I am your friend.”

“Can you so perjure yourself ? Are you not the King’s friend ? ”

“O yes, indeed ! ”

“How can you be his friend and mine ? ”

“Why, as the bee’s the flower’s friend.  
I carry messages of love.”

“Does he ask mine of me ? ”

“Just that, madam—only your love, no more.”

“No more ? You say well. Why, truly my love were a little thing to be valued at no more than a man’s base desire.”

“The man is the King, madam. His desire is great like himself.”

“The King is the man, sir, and the man is hateful to me. Will you tell him so, and be indeed my friend ? ”

“It would serve you ill, madam.”

“Will he force me ? Alack ! I will kill myself.”

“ Nay, that you shall not, save you hold your breath and die of your own sweetness like a rose. No other way, be assured. He will wear you in his bosom first.”

“ God ! Dear Master Kay, good Master Kay, sweet, gentle friend, let me kill myself ! ”

“ I must not.”

“ But to leap from the wall ! It is a little way—but a step, and to save me hell ! You would not have me burn for ever ? ”

“ I would have you reasonable, madam.”

She had fallen on her knees to him, this Maud Fitzwalter, fair daughter of Robert the Baron, who was to come to head the revolt against the infamous King. Her long white fingers plucked at his sleeves ; her eyes sought his eyes imploringly. He drank of them, lusting in their passionate appeal. She was called Madelon la Belle, and to see her was to think of spring, with its crab-blossoms against a blue sky, its glow and youth and waywardness. There is a lack of the sense of symmetry in Love that makes his sweetest faces out of drawing ; and yet one never doubts but that they are Love’s faces, as endearing as they are faulty and for their very faultiness most lovable. His drawing, I say, may be defective, but he knows the trick of lip and eyelash to

a curve and how to snare men's hearts thereby. And so, while we criticise his work, saying that this or that line goes astray, we would not have it turned by a hair's breadth nearer the truth, lest we should miss love in aiming at perfection.

Such a face was Maud's, framed in its yellow braids so long that, parted from her forehead and plaited in with a cord of gold, they almost touched the ground when she stood up. For the rest her simple tunic was green, and clasped loosely at the hips by a belt of jewelled gold, the slack of which hung low. Madelon la Belle she was called, or Passerose, for the sweetness of her Saxon face and the Saxon blue of her eyes. But most of all she herself loved her name of Maid Marian, given her in those green holts and brakes of Sherwood whither she had followed her own true love, the outlawed Earl, and whence, in a dire moment, she had been ravished by the curscd King. He had seen her loveliness and coveted it, and where John coveted was no safety for wife or virgin. And so it had befallen that once, when abiding in her father's castle of Dunmow, the Baron being absent, he had come, shedding in his hot haste his smooth phrases and courtly wiles, and had torn her from her shelter and carried her to

London to his Tower on the Thames. And there he kept her fast, not doubting but that she would yield to him in time, and glooming ever a little and a little more as her obduracy held him aloof.

This Kay was one of the King's minions, whom he would send to bribe or threaten the lovely captive into surrender. The fellow was no better than a maquercau, who tasted passion by deputy. He was confident, in the soft persuasiveness of his voice, in the irresistibility of his figure and finery, of the ultimate success of his mediation. His hair, rolled about his ears, was scented; his tunic, short beyond custom, was of gold-embroidered crimson, and his hose were like-hued. A curt-mantcau, of cloth of gold lined with green, hung about his shoulders, and on his feet were boots of green cloth, the upper part of lattice-work, embossed at each crossing with a little leopard's head in gold. He had no real heart of tenderness or mercy. He was a mere painted mask, as bowelless as the Elf-maiden herself.

"I would have you reasonable, madam," he said.

She rose and stood away from him.

"Is it not in reason to guard one's virtue?" she said, panting.

“ Nay,” he answered ; “ but if you guard it alone and weaponless, and the thief come in well armed and strong of body ? It were reason better to yield it with a good grace.”

She threw herself upon a bench wailing, “ O hence, thou beast ! ” And so she lay writhing—“ Only to die—and they will not let me die ! ”

She sought and cried for death perpetually ; she knew she was lost, lacking that kind friend. Was it not pitiful ? she whom life had so favoured and love so moulded. She sought him, moaning and wringing her hands, at barred windows, in dusky corners ; she entreated her gaolers to have pity on her, to put poison into her food, to lend her a weapon, or a pathway to the battlements whence she might cast herself down. Her every prayer but increased their watchfulness ; Death was excluded from her as jealously as if he had been her outlawed lover himself.

On this day her desperation had risen to a pitch scarce endurable. There had been signs that the royal patience was near exhausted. And it was late spring without —she could see it through her window across the green flats that stretched beyond the moat, beyond her prison. Its sweetness reminded her of past days in the forest, so

that her heart came near to breaking. Her lips whispered the words of the little glad song that she and her Robin had often sung together :

*“Summer is a comin’ in,  
Loud sing cuckoo.  
Groweth seed and bloweth mead,  
And springeth the wood now.  
Sing cuckoo, cuckoo.”*

“ Sing cuckoo,” she wept, “ the wanton’s shame ! O Robin, my Robin ! ” She would never see him again—could never wish to. In a few hours, perhaps, she would be a thing for his scorn, a thing that not death, found too late, could cleanse.

In the evening came the King himself, with his frowning eyes and grim jaw that, with the thick beard clipped close on it, looked like a bulldog’s. He was in a furious mood, his Queen having vexed him, and flashed and scintillated like a scaled devil in the light of the dozen torches he brought.

“ How now,” he thundered, “ thou rever’s doxy ! Still obdurate ? ”

Her very heart shook ; but she stood up to him bravely.

“ Plunge thy knife into my breast, Sir King,” she said, “ and with my last sigh I will praise thee.”

“ What ! ” he snarled—“ so much in love

with Death ? We'll see to it thy desire's whetted in his fondling. He shall prick thee here and there before ye close. Away with her to the Watch Tower ! ”

It was at least a respite, and she had dreaded the instant worst. This Watch, or Round Turret, rose from the north-east angle of the great Keep. He had her there at his mercy. Her cries might rise to heaven, but could not penetrate the dense fabric below. In this chill, high dungeon they imprisoned the girl. Its cold, its dreadful loneliness, scant food, and the silent guard should break her spirit, the wretch thought. He would taste her submission to the dreggs, then fling her to his lackeys to teach her what it meant to flout her King. She answered by starving herself ; on which came Kay, the silky-tongued, and warned her smoothly that such contumacy could only invite its swift reprisal. She would not be permitted so to slip through her royal lover's hands. Whereat she ate all that they would give her, and despaired the more.

There was no escape, none. Locked in as she was, she knew that her every movement was canvassed by hidden eyes, her every sigh recorded. And Robin made no sign.

One day it moved her to hear unwonted

sounds rising from the outer ward below, into which the public were admitted on occasion of State festivities, executions, and so forth. The multitudinous jollity of voices, soaring above the whine of bugle and tap of drum, proclaimed it a May-day revel, when the whole place was delivered over to sport and merriment.

She could not see from her high, narrow window, sunk deep in the wall ; but the babble flowing in on a shaft of sunlight made her heart warm as it had never felt for days. Some spirit of release seemed to ride in on the happy music, some emotion that made her bosom heave and her eyes fill thick with tears.

She was standing, drinking in the merry noise, when her lids blinked involuntarily, and, with a swish and smack on the ceiling of her cell, something alighted at her feet. She fancied on the instant that a bird had flown in and struck against the stone ; but, looking down quickly, she saw that it was a broken arrow—one of a dear, familiar pattern. With a gasp she stooped, snatched at it, and stood listening. There was no sign of anyone having observed. With swift trembling fingers she detached a strand of green worsted which was knotted about the shaft under the quill, and found beneath

a folded scrap of parchment, which, on being opened, revealed a glutinous smear of brown substance, and just these four woeful words written above :

*“ Poor Robin’s Pledge. Farewell.”*

It was her death-warrant.

So sweet and tragic, her heart near stopped from its sorrow as she read it. She knew at once what it was—a mortal Arab poison, given long years ago to her woodland lover by a follower of the Lion King. It might serve him in a sore need, had been the words accompanying the gift—to taste it was death. And once Robin had shown it to her, proposing, half playfully, that they should pledge one another in its Lethe were Fate ever to dispart them.

And so she knew that her last hope was dead before her. Robin could not come. He was hurt ; he was ill ; the guards were too many for them, the Fates too strong, and their only refuge at last was in death. He had sent some one of his cunning archers, Will Scarlet belike, to take advantage of this merrymaking to speed the message, and, when she had realiscd all that it meant to her, she fell on her knees with a bursting prayer of gratitude to the Providence, to the dear lover, between whom her honour was held safe from the despoiler.

She never doubted that her Robin meant to share the pledge. Likely his dear spirit was waiting for her now, eager to link with hers in the green woods where first their loves were spoken. Fearful of interruption, she put her lips to the poison, and died with his name on them.

That evening came Master Kay to the cell, with a sick smile on his mouth, and in his hands a tray of comfortable things, including a flask of drugged wine. The King's patience was exhausted.

But when he saw what had happened he stole out, and fled to join the refractory Barons, of whom was Fitzwalter, father of Madelon la Belle.

And in the meantime Robin did not die. The poison that was to kill him came years later from the hand of his kinswoman, the Prioress of Kirklees. Women will take things so literally.

## Raleigh

“ADMIT, Captain,” said the scholar, “that Opportunity signifieth by the lexicon a meet or convenient time; and what is time but an abstraction? Wherefore whoso seizeth opportunity seizeth an abstraction, the which has never been held, nor ever will or can be held, to constitute a violation of that social contract which is called the law.”

Two men were seated in a bower of the “Ship Aground” at Greenwich. The bright little garden at their feet ran down to a low parapet overlooking the river, whose waters, gay with shipping, sparkled merrily in the June sunshine. Behind them the tinkle and gossip of the inn sounded pleasantly; to their left a small plantation of trees led direct to the boundaries of the royal palace—“Placentia,” or the “Manor of Plea-zaunce,” it was called—whose red roofs and bowed Italian windows were plainly visible through the green. A flight of wooden steps in the embankment to their right constituted the public landing-place; and

for the rest and everywhere were climbing wood and lawn, tumbled with houses like warm red boulders, and gathered at their summit into that Lancastrian tower which was destined in future ages to blossom into the universal meridian.

The men sat on either side a rustic table, a stoup of warm ale with a toast in it between them. The soldier, strong and thickset, was Captain Nicholas Blount, of the Earl of Susscx's guard. The other, a dissipated, whimsical-looking young man, dressed in black, with a plain falling band, and on his head the scholar's biretta with embracing flaps, was Master John Sparrow, ex-graduate of Trinity and clerk to the same nobleman. The former sprawled with his doublet unbuttoned, and his rapier and bonnet laid aside. He was an honest, downright soul, more of a Davus than an Oedipus, and yet with a naïve humorous side to him that ingratiated. In common with some soldiers of his rare time he had a tremendous respect for learning.

“ Jack Sparrow,” quoth he, “ thou hast a damnable overplus of sophistication to answer a plain man withal. But I'll have thee there. Is not theft an abstraction, and yet punishable by the law ? ”

"Well countered, Captain," said the clerk ; "but I will prove it otherwise."

"How, sharp wit ? "

"Why, look you ; by the token that a theft is an abstraction, an abstraction is a theft. But I say an abstraction is no theft, sith it steals nothing but time, which is itself an abstraction. Is a thief a thief, therefore, who steals from himself ? "

"Thou playest on the word, that hath another meaning."

"God save your neck if you'll insist on 't. One day you'll be caught in a reverie and hanged for an abstraction. For me, one word one meaning is enough."

"What hanged—Nick hanged ! " cried a voice, that of one of two gentlemen who at the moment came round the leafy angle of the bower. "What is his offence ? "

Blount and the young man rose to their feet, the one with a jocund, the second with a respectful manner of salutation.

"Fair welcome, masters," said the soldier. "Your wit shall save me a halter, or I'll be hanged for it."

The two new-comers were Mr. Greville and his *alter ego* Mr. Philip Sidney, the latter already the *preux chevalier* of his age. Though now in no more than his twenty-seventh year, his world-knowledge and

accomplishments exceeded those of most contemporary gallants. Tall, spare, with a rather long melancholy face full of sweetness and intelligence, his whole aspect conveyed an assurance of reasonableness and liberality. His hair, warm yellow and somewhat sleek, was parted at one side into the long love-lock in vogue; his doublet and trunk-hose were of a sober grey but laced with a rich frilling of gold. So was his own quiet nature veined with light. A poet and scholar, a traveller and man of action, a courtier in the worthiest sense, some paltry squabble thrust upon him had banished him latterly from the side of the sovereign to whom his qualities were most endeared, and he was only present in Greenwich on a private affair during the absence of the Court. His friend and coetanian, the Lord Brooke to be—he who came to desire of posterity no greater recognition than that he had been Shakespeare's friend—was a young man of like learning, sincerity, and skill in arms.

“Why, Nick,” quoth Sidney, “the alternative is certain. But whereby hangs the halter?”

“Round my neck,” answered Blount. “He seeks to throttle me, this learned clerk here, with his sophistications.”

The three gentlemen sat down, the student remaining standing.

“How throttle ? ” said Sidney.

Jack Sparrow took the answer out of the soldier’s mouth :

“We were discussing your friend, Master Raleigh, sirs, whom the Captain here will dub the very thief of opportunity.”

“And hold to it,” said Blount.

“Nay,” said the ex-graduate, “when, as I maintain and repeat, Opportunity is the common property, whereby to take it is no more offence in a man than the picking of blackberries on the highway.”

“Or the picking of pockets,” said Mr. Greville.

“Hold, Fulke,” said Sidney : “I do perceive a flaw there, in that the seizure or prehension is by its very terms held personal to the appropriator. Thus I may take *my* opportunity, but not another man’s.”

“Well decreed, Phil,” cried the soldier, with a shout of triumph, and smacked a hand to his knee. “How now, Master Quiddity ? Wilt answer to that ? ”

“With submission, Mr. Sidney,” replied the student, “is not all opportunity yours when you see it ? *Oblatam occasionem tene* : the warrant of Cicero is in the phrase.”

“ The very offering, my friend, implies a priority of ownership by another ; wherefore, if I seize another man’s opportunity uninvited, I am guilty of a moral felony.”

“ But supposing he, that other, omits or refuses to make use of his own ? ” persisted the student, with his tongue in his cheek.

Nicholas Blount roared : “ Omits, quotha ! But what is mine is mine, rogue, though there be a thousand popinjays could convert the thing to their own more profitable usage. Wherefore I say, who takes my opportunity steals ; wherefore I say, this Raleigh is a thief of opportunity.”

“ Instance, instance ! ” cried the two young gentlemen, crowing ; and Greville bawled for the drawer to bring wine.

The soldier grunted : “ I’m no man for equivoque ; I hold by what I say. You shall hear and judge between us. This Walter, sirs——”

“ A very proper courtier of his inches,” said Greville.

“ Your friend, sir,” answered Blount sarcastically ; “ and mine—God quit us of all such allies. He was my friend once, and took the privileges. There was little he would not take, including the wall, of any man. To do him justice, a sweet fighting Hector, full of courage as of grace. He was

just home from Ireland when we met last year—fresh from carving of the Kerns. Yet a hand like milk. Nothing would ever stick to it but gold. I cry you mercy, gentles. He was my friend, I say."

Greville broke into laughter, and Sidney smiled, his lips twitching.

"*Castigo te non quod*—ch, master clerk?" said the latter. "Perchance he chastised the Captain for very love."

"You shall hear," said Blount grimly. "A proper courtier, quoth Master Greville—a very proper courtier. I doubt it not. How looked he when you saw him last?"

"It was at Whitehall," said Greville. "You know the man—the mirror of fashion, the prince of wit, the pink of assurance. One noon he met the Queen just stepping from her closet. 'What time is it, good sir?' quoth she. 'What time your Highness pleases,' he answered. 'Then,' says her Majesty, 'I will have it the hour when men speak truth.' 'Alas, madam!' says Raleigh, 'do you seek a pretext for destroying me?' 'What pretext, sir?' she asks. 'Why,' says he, 'the enforced confession of my hopeless passion for a Queen.' "

The soldier snorted alarmingly. "I

warrant he'd rehearsed it, preening and curling before his glass," he said.

"Alack!" said Sidney; "his hair curls naturally—the worse for sleeker heads."

"How went he?" said Blount—"a painted popinjay?"

"Always in silk and velvet," answered Greville demurely—"white for choice, and his doublet jewelled in the seams. He becomes his dress, in sooth; knows how to shadow with ambrosial fleece the high pale culture of his forehead; wears his sword as if he used it; hangs his cloak——"

The soldier roared out:

"Hold! His cloak? God's grace! It hangs—hang him, I say! So I picture him—all but the cloak. It was here we sat together, in this green arbour, but a year ago. Just home from bloody Ircland was he, yet as white and cool as swan's-down. We were here, I say, we two, in this very spot, and the Court at Pleazaunce. The Queen was in her barge on the river. We saw her pass, and the rogue's eyes dreamed. Some caprice—some premonition belike—engaged her Majesty to land at the common steps yonder. They were wet and foul, the morning having rained, and, perceiving his chance, my comrade snatched up cloak, and leaped and joined the throng that

hovercd on the royal advent. I came more leisurely behind, and saw the pretty Queen mount up and hesitate, pursing her lips in comical dismay before a pool of mud. And then, all in a moment—but you've heard the story ? ”

“ He spread his cloak for her to step on ? ”

“ Damn him ! ”

“ Why so ? ”

“ It was *my* cloak, that was all—new green velvet, and home that morning from the cutter’s. Own him now a thief of opportunity.”

Mr. Sidney and Mr. Greville looked at one another gravely a moment, then burst into a shout of laughter.

## Marlowe

“ **P**RITHEE, Kit, pay me the pound you owe me.”

Mr. Christopher Marlowe, Master of Arts, playwright and rakehell, sprawled his arms upon the tavern table, and leered inebriously across it at the speaker. Behind him an open red lattice gave upon a sunny street alive with swarthy gold-car-ringed mariners ; before his sleepy eyes glowed, framed in the end of a black passage, like a picture in a diorama, a square of green banks and flashing waters webbed with rigging. The waters were the waters of Deptford Creek, and the tackle, or at least part of it, belonged to Drake’s ship, the *Golden Hind*, already, in this June of the year 1593, laid by for perpetuity at her Majesty’s command, as a memorial of her nation’s characteristic prowess.

Marlowe tinkled with his fingers an empty flagon on the table.

“ A pound, Frank Archer ? ” quoth he in a slurred derisive voice. “ Listen here— as empty as my pocket or your head. An

I had a pound, I should know better what to do with it."

The man he addressed, a fellow-actor in Lord Strange's company, stood up sulkily before him. He was a neurotic player of women's parts, and somehow uncleanly attractive to the sex he paraphrased. Perhaps he understood it enough to be feared by it—a lithe vicious creature, as white-faced as a girl, and subject to feminine spites and hysterics. He hated the playwright just now, not only because the latter owed him money, but because the two were rival suitors for the favour of some riverside *Thaïs*. It was a pitiful association, as who, regarding that other figure of bright genius, could not but feel. Not yet thirty, with blue eyes and honey hair, the face of an angel, the forehead of a sage, the indulgence of insatiable appetites had already marked down this Christopher Marlowe for death or insanity. He seemed to find no adequate satisfaction for his passions' hunger short of feeding their ravenous fires, as Cellini fed the molten arteries of his *Perseus*, with dishes and quart measures.

"An you had one?" protested the player. "What! with your *Edward* still mouthing it at the 'Rose'?—a damned play."

“A damned play lines no purses,” said Marlowe.

“Pay me my pound, I say.”

“For what? To frank you to the stews? A man were a fool so to accommodate his rival.”

“Ah! You fear my rivalry.”

“I fear the woman’s cupidity, sir. If Kit with gold, the better; but gold at any price, says she. So they compound. Will you take a post-obit?”

“I want my money, Kit Marlowe.”

“How the parrot repeats! No, on my honour, Frank, on my honour. I am drunk out. Should I not otherwise have been before you with the girl? I cannot pay.”

A shadow darkened the lattice, and Archer, on the point of retorting, paused with his mouth open. Some stranger, attracted by the colloquy, had stopped to listen. He came round now by the open porch and entered the room.

“By your favour, sirs,” he said, “I overheard a name to whose possessor methought I owed a duty. Was not it Master Marlowe’s, the playwright’s?”

Christopher nodded, without rising.

“Duty’s a dry debt,” said he. “I would you had ought the name that cup of burnt

sack which my present poverty denies me.”

The new-comer was a young man—little more than his own age—of a very fine and distinguished appearance. His face was delicate and handsome, but a little irregular in its contour, as if its commanding intelligence were easily at the mercy of its humour. A chestnut moustache and beard, small but already strong, clothed a jaw a thought underhung. The eyes above were wonderful—brown vivacious lights of sagacity that seemed to take all observation for their province. A comely compact figure, of the average height, clothed sombrely but richly in purple velvet, a snowy ruff, a flexible black hat with a rolled band of silk above its brim—such completed a personality which was as attractive as it was compelling.

“Is that so?” said the stranger. “Genius insolvent? ‘*Ingenium res adversæ nudare solent, celare secundæ.*’ Your poverty should be your gain, sir.”

“As with the Horace you quote?” answered the playwright. “I ask for nothing better, sir, nor for a more enlightened Mæcenas than her Majesty’s Counsel-Extraordinary.”

Mr. Francis Bacon—for it was he, indeed

—laughed, knowing himself detected, as if pleased.

“ I am well answered,” he said. He was already, young as he was, in advance of his amazing promise—a Bencher and Reader of his Inn, a Member of Parliament, my Lord of Essex’s loved client. And his vast imagination had been the first to grasp the full significance of the dramatic revolution inaugurated by this scapegrace genius who sat revealed before him. “ And by a scholar,” he added.

“ An exhibitioner, an it please your worship,” cried the other. “ Bachelor and Master of Arts of Benet’s College of your own University; translator of Helen’s Rape from Coluthus, and, since, a humble reformer of the Miracles, and, as some aver, even a worker of new ones.”

“ I have been eye and ear-witness of your *Tambourlaine*,” said the stranger; “ of your *Faustus*, of your *Jew*; lastly of your *Edward the King*; and I have no desire to traverse the statement. You have done things; you have revealed; you have opened out worlds which others, perchance, shall colonise. I doff my hat to that fine madness of your Muse—the hot passion that tears the ‘unities’ to rags and leaves her clothed in Nature. Withal, Master

Marlowe, I have a bone or two to pick with you."

"Alack!" cried the playwright: "this arid mirthless feast!"

"Anon, anon, my gentleman! Grace before meat."

"But sack before all. Have you never mastered, learned sir, the five most excellent reasons for drinking?"

"I know them not."

"Why, a friend's visit, the thirst that is, the thirst that will be, the flavour of the wine, and any other reason."

"They are reasons for. There is one more potent against."

"What's that?"

"Why reason itself, which, being robbed by wine, hath no reason to applaud it."

He saw, indeed, that the man was irretrievably drunk, and that he was wasting time on him. He prepared to go on his way—which was to Greenwich, where the Court was being held.

"Not robbed, but transmuted," cried Marlowe. "O liquid alchemy! So to be traduced! Have I not ought to thee all the golden treasures of my brain? And he prefers a bone! Well, sir, pick it, pick it."

"It is german to the matter, I think. Thy golden treasures sink thee even like

the shipwrecked miser's laden belt. Not reason exalted is wine's, but reason debased—so lowered in the mind's balance that it sees all the world lopsided, deformed. Such is my quarrel, sir, with the author of the *Jew of Malta*. A man cannot lust with him but he can do naught else ; a Jew cannot be a Jew but he is an unredeemed monster. It is not so in fact ; we derive from the multitudinous past—are compact of a thousand inconsistencies. There is more good than ill in all men. The purpose of the drama should be to hold a mirror up to Nature—to give us truth, not anamorphosis. There is no truth in wine, despite the proverb."

He moved to go, and the playwright sprang to his feet.

"No truth ?" he cried. "Then let me swallow lies faster than Churchmen can promulgate them. The world's redeemed, they say—I see it not ; we are the children of a beneficent Providence, they say—It will not even feed us, but sends the worm and storm to kill the grain It's given. My figments are the types of what I see—passion, black malice, usury—selfishness unredeemed by God's love, but tempered, brute-like, by His terror. An arrant orb of reptiles, worshipping through fear. And so

I paint it—sober. Then—drink ! Ah, it is my good angel, my better half, my sweet gentle mate that woos me to the larger temperance. I could show you things—but there ! Not truth ?—not sordid truth ? Give me the noble lie, then, that transports me to Elysium, that lends me the wider vision, and I will rain benevolence on this crawling sphere. I am no pessimist in wine.”

His eyes were flaming, his breast heaved, some real emotion strung him.

The great lawyer smiled. “God forbid I should debar you Elysium,” he said, and throwing a gold angel on the table, he left the room.

For some moments after he was gone Marlowe, his passion slowly subsiding, stood eyeing the bright coin.

“A lackey’s vail,” he said at length, “yet the obolus to pay my passage to Elysium. And did I not earn it ? Answer, old sack ; answer, my rosy Thais of the leaping-house. Elysium, Elysium ! O, it opens to me ! ”

A hand came past him like a snake and nipped the coin.

“The debt you ought me,” gulped Archer, with a pallid snigger. “We are quits at last, Christopher.”

With a snarl the playwright turned on the thief.

“ Give me back mine own.”

“ It is mine.” He hugged and cherished the piece convulsively. “ You ought it me. I have the first claim—to Doll and your Elysium.”

“ To hell rather—I’ll send you there—be warned.”

“ I’ll not yield it.”

He slithered aside, preparing to bolt. With a scream of rage Marlowe drew a knife from his belt and sprang upon him. The actor, warding off the assault, struck out blindly. His arm caught the vicious wrist with a force that made it twist and recoil, driving back the blade full into the eye of the assailant. There followed a gasp, a stagger, a tearing fall—and then silence.

It was the prelude to that immortal music whose symphony had already closed in Elysium.

And the lawyer, profoundly thoughtful, went unconscious on his way.

## Queen Elizabeth

“ **W**HAT was that ? ”

“ Madam, it was the snow falling from the roof.”

“ Methought it was a footstep.”

“ No, madam.”

“ There, heard you it not—the sound of someone running ? ”

“ But a rat behind the wainscot. Your Grace’s ears deceive you.”

“ What, for ever ? Poor ears, so curst to lies and flattery ! ”

“ Your Highness is overwrought.”

“ Will someone speak the truth to me before I die ? God, how my bones ache ! No step ? Go look in the gallery, child.”

The girl to whom she spoke, leaving her embroidery-frame, stepped lightly to the door, glanced this way and that, and returned. Her young eyes shone humid between pity and awe.

“ No, indeed, madam,” she said low. “ The corridor is empty.”

The Queen, without answering, crossed to the window and stood staring from it. It

looked upon the privy garden of Whitchall, now one carpet of quiet, sad-coloured snow with the river ruled across its far end like an inky mourning border. A motionless fog brooded over the trees and over the Palace buildings trooped to right and left. There seemed no sign of life anywhere.

Within, a glare of fire burning on a great stone-hooded hearth dashed the wainscoting with red, and crimsoned the hands and faces of the figures in the panels of tapestry, and touched the gold groining of the ceiling and the fresh rushes on the floor with smears like blood. The old eyes, gazing so fixedly across the snow, seemed streaked with the same ruddy hue, but reflected from another and an inward fire. As to the first, she was ever disdainfully insensible to cold, this gaunt, strong old Tudor woman.

Two ladies-in-waiting, a mother and her daughter, had their places by the hearth, where they embroidered together, the former seated, the child bending over. They were the Queen's only attendants for the moment, since her Majesty was in that tortured frame of mind when her own sole company was but less terrible to her than the thought of an officious suite, veiling curiosity under devotion. Human neigh-

bourhood, silent, tactful, unobtrusive, was the balm her torn soul most needed ; any ostentatious sympathy would have maddened her. She could abandon herself to herself beside this gentle pair, as if they were no more than inarticulate animals—wistful dumb affections on which she could lean her voluble heart, certain of their unconscious understanding.

Now the younger lady, returning to her place, stood awestruck a moment, then bent and whispered to her mother, “ O, madam, the Tower gun ! How shall we close her Grace’s ears to it ? ”

The Queen, hearing the whisper but not its import, started, and, with a deep flurried sigh, turned round. The wild tumult of thoughts in her mind found expression in detached and broken questions, abstractions, self-communings.

“ ‘ All wounds have scars but that of fantasy, all affections their relenting but that of womankind.’ Who writ those words ? Not the mutinous boy. ’Twas Raleigh—he that saw us like Dian, the gentle wind blowing the hair from our face. Essex never spoke such balm. He was no courtier—the worse for him. Am I like Dian ? ”

The elder lady had arisen hurriedly, and

stood, her daughter clinging to her arm, to answer to the voice, which appeared to have addressed her.

“Yes, madam,” she whispered low.

“He never flattered, I say,” went on the Queen. “He was too honest—the devil damn honesty! What day is it?”

“Your Highness,” was the tremulous answer, “it is the twenty-fifth day of February.”

She had known it well enough. All night within her haunted brain the horror of this coming day had brooded—this ghastly morning when on Tower Hill the young Earl of Essex—he was but thirty-four—was to pay the penalty of his madness. She stood staring before her, like one tranced.

“Never flattered,” she repeated—“a bad policy where a woman reigns. The twenty-fifth, is it? Let us know if my Lord of Essex sends or writes.”

“Yes, madam—O yes, indeed!”

The girl, leaning to her mother, buried her pale face in her shoulder.

“Hush!” whispered the Queen; “was not that a step?”

“Indeed, madam, I cannot hear a sound.”

“A stubborn, relentless dog!” muttered the Queen hoarsely. “Let the axe convince

him. He will see clearer being dead—no longer dub my mind as crooked as my body ; learn that the soul's glory waxeth with the years, striving to slough its vesture like a snake. A fool, that cannot penetrate that crackling veil, and see, other than a boy, how Truth abhors externals. Raleigh is older ; Raleigh can look deeper. Shall I not be Dian still to him ? ”

She faced her frightened witnesses with the enormous challenge—an old, arid, charmless woman of sixty-eight. Her withered, clay-white face was latticed with countless wrinkles ; her nose was high and pinched ; her thin, bloodless lips parted to show a ruin of blackened teeth—little spoiled and broken gravestones recording dead memories. Her gullet pursed ; her eyes were bloodshot ; the red periwig on her poll glowed like a dull flame over expiring ashes. Even her sloven dress betrayed the sickness of her spirit.

“ Yes, indeed, madam,” said the mother.

“ You lie ! ” cried Elizabeth fiercely. “ He is false like the rest. His eyes betray his lips. Their love-light is the gilding on my crown. When he looks beneath I see mine image in them, an old and loveless woman—barren, and old, and loveless. Do you not hear my heart cry ? It turns on a

dry axle. O, I would give my queenhood to weep! So utterly alone—no child, no heir, no hope. They say that Charles of Valois wasted and died of poison. What could he expect? Was he not a prince and curst to flattery?"

She strode up and down once or twice in intolerable anguish.

"Truth!" she cried—"truth! And yet when it was mine at last, I turned and struck it down."

"Not truth, your Grace, but jealousy," ventured the trembling lady.

"Jealousy!" exclaimed the Queen, stopping suddenly. She stared at the speaker, her breath falling from hard to soft. "Was he jealous, think you?"

"O! madam," said the other, "is it not thy player, Master Shakespeare, that calleth jealousy 'green-eyed,' like as with sour bile that clouds the vision. The distempered speak distempered thoughts, and often turn the most against their most-beloved. I count it green-eyed jealousy with him because he saw your Highness so distorted—not to extenuate the grievous crimes upon which his passions launched him. O, pardon me, madam!"

The Queen stood with her eyes still fixed upon the speaker, but it was evident that

their vision took no heed of her, though her ears regarded the import of her speech.

“ Jealous ! ” she said, with a tremulous sigh. “ Mayhap like a silly quean I gave him cause, sporting with my troth-ring till it rolled into the well. He was too sure and bold, forgetting who had lifted him, and who could cast him down. But, jealous ? Does not his hair curl sweetly on his forehead, child ? ”

“ O, madam ! Your Grace ! ”

“ And his eyes so frank and fearless. Fear ! He knows it not, the rash and headstrong fool ! To think to overbear us ! — teach our displeasure a lesson ! O, a venture once too often ! Because he can boast a strain of royal blood in his veins to dare to lift his head at us ! to stamp, and cry : ‘ Now, madam, do you hear me ? ’ or ‘ I would have it thus, or thus and thus.’ Such presumption ! And yet to see the pretty lord—his lip thrust out in scorn of sycophancy—a man of men, brave, honest, generous, and a fool.”

“ Rash and foolish indeed, your Highness.”

“ Those are but virtues in reverse. Had he no cause to doubt the love that made him but to ruin ? ”

“ I cry your Grace’s mercy.”

“ What for ? ”

“ The ruin followed on the treachery.”

“ Was he a traitor ? ”

“ O, madam ! did he not curry favour with the King of Scotland, and plot and league to win him the succession ? ”

“ Yes, he’s a traitor.”

“ Your Grace forgive me.”

“ And I’m a woman.”

“ Madam ! ”

“ At the last I yield him all my pride and self-will. He hath so much of me, ‘twere idle to reserve that little. Who is that coming ? ”

“ ‘Twas but the wind in the corridor, madam.”

“ I swear I heard him.”

“ No, madam.”

“ Pride ! Will he not meet us so far—but to crave our clemency ? He knows the way, and, not taking it, must die ! What o’clock is it ? O God, he shall not die ! Send for my lord Keeper ; have horses ready. Hush ! he’s coming ! Should I not know his footfall ? ”

She drew herself erect and away ; a flush came to her withered cheek ; she was the Queen again, aloof, haughty, self-contained. The two terrified women, shrunk together into the shadows by the

hearth, saw her eyes gaze into vacancy, heard her lips address some apparition beyond their ken :

“ What imports this visit, my Lord of Essex ? Who gave you leave to come ? Our Constable of the Tower shall be roundly questioned, trust to us. What ! are you so pale at last to meet offended majesty ? Will you not speak ? Will you not pray the mercy you have abused in us too long ? A viper in our bosom—O, my lord, that loved and trusted you ! What can we think or say, God help us ! But we will hear what is to hear. So pale ?—the sickness of the stones hath chilled thy fiery blood. Why, I would have come to you, you know well, if you had sent it. Why did you not send it—prouder than thy Queen ? Where is the ring ? Give it me. O, I have waited, dear my love—have waited dying for this token. Speak—utter one word of sorrow, and I will forgive thee. Aye, kneel so and bow thy comely head——”

A burning log on the hearth fell with a crash and a spurt of flame ; a shrill agonised cry broke from the lips of the Queen ; she flung her hands before her eyes :

“ O God in heaven ! The falling head ! They are killing my love ! ”

Weeping and trembling, the two women

crept from their corner. At that instant a dull boom, coming from down the river, shook the glass of the casement. The Queen dropped her hands.

“What was that?” she cried. Her face was all distorted.

“Your Majesty!”

“What was that, I say? My Lord of Essex! He was here but now! Where is he?”

“In heaven, by God’s mercy, madam. It was the Tower gun.”

The Queen sank down moaning where she stood.

## Drake's Chaplain

LOOKING like a man who had fallen from a roof, a pulp of red and grey, with joints heaved out of all relation to anatomy, the prisoner of the Inquisition was haled before his most Catholic Majesty, who sat in a closet of the Escurial eating rich pastry from a salver, and licking his fingers between. A swarthy guard on either side held up the poor wretch, else he would have weltered to the stones, for he had no limbs capable of supporting him. Yet he swaggered in grotesque suggestion, and gave a twisted parody of a laugh. The pitiful, it seemed, where such existed, could endure the sight of his mutilation less than he himself the fact. He was one of those endowed with a constitutional insensibility to pain. That such human anomalies occur, witness the contemporary examples of Gérard, who murdered William the Silent, and Ravaillac, who stabbed Henry of Navarre. Each endured, jesting and unflinching, the most exquisite tortures, the least of which, one

cannot but think, would have killed any man of normal nerves.

Like Gérard, like Ravaillac, was William Donne—Drake's Chaplain, as he was called, being trebly damned in the title. He had been captured in that final descent of his master on Cadiz, and had thereafter, of course, nothing but the worst to expect. Not short shrift, but particular torments was the ruling for the "sea-dogs," whom Philip had especial cause to hate. The appeal of their odd buccaneering divinity was largely to humour, of which he was utterly devoid. He had been offended by nothing so much as Drake's boast of singeing his Spanish Majesty's beard, and he retorted, wherever he got the chance, with flame and molten lead.

But now he was, for him, in a rare good temper—which might continue until the pastry, to which he was glutonously addicted, began to assert its effects on an enfeebled digestion. Gleeful in the triumphant maturation of his long-elaborated schemes, he playcd in fancy at baiting and pricking the English bull, to which he was about to deliver the Spanish quietus, and William Donne offered himself as well as any to symbolise the fated victim.

It was the 1st of August, 1588; the in-

vincible Armada, after a mishap or two, had sailed for Flanders, where the Prince of Parma awaited it with a force of seventeen thousand veterans and a fleet of flat-bottomed transports; Portugal was annexed, William of Orange dead, and, to crown all, the Leaguers, under Henry of Guise, held France and Paris. The Catholic nobility in England only awaited, according to the King's Jesuit advisers, the landing of the Spanish troops to join forces with the invaders; there was nothing to fear at last and everything to gain. No wonder his Majesty, for ever cold, calculating, patient, had relaxed a little in the near prospect of this unprecedented harvest of his sowing.

He swallowed a last scrap of pastry, and dusted his fingers delicately. An emaciated little man of sixty, with over-blown forehead, small-pupilled ice-blue eyes, and pinched aquiline nose, not all his power nor all his dominions could redeem him from the charge of personal insignificance. His mouth was repulsively wide; his lower jaw, from which bristled a point of grizzled beard, once dusty yellow, was so protruded as to thrust into prominence a disorder of broken teeth like an old bulldog's. He was dressed unostentatiously in velvet doublet, trunk-hose and curt-manteau, all black, and

the collar of the Golden Fleece hung round his neck under a small ruff. Such was Philip, as he sat regarding, without one spasm of emotion, the human wreck before him. Illiterate, infinitesimal-minded, pusillanimous, a disgusting debauchee, he had no one virtue in all the world but sincerity, and with that he endowed a thousand crimes. The monstrous idolatry, through him, of the hereditary principle he embodied, had long supplicd its own moral in the torture and immolation of countless hosts of guiltless, happy human beings, in scores of midnight assassinations, in the poisoning of the very springs of nature. Let it be said of him that the murder of his own son was his greatest act of grace, and there is the man summarised.

An English Jesuit, Father Allen, the King's principal authority for the statement about the Catholic nobility, hung confidentially over his Majesty's chair, his chill grey eyes scanning the figure of that mutilated fellow-countryman. A second, a Spaniard, but of the like black cloth and inhuman aspect, stood motionless near the prisoner. The King, having cleansed his fingers, glanced up covertly (to the day of his own agonised death he could never look any man, not even the meanest, in the face)

and spoke suddenly, in the rapid voice that always seemed to grudge its own utterance :

“ The gnat will kill the King ! Were those the man's words ? ”

Allen looked towards his colleague, who answered in a passionless voice :

“ Those and little else—the constant burden of his blasphemy. On the pulley, on the rack, wrenched in the ‘ Escalero,’ or with the greased soles of his feet frying at the brazier, always that cry or song. He utters it as it were a charm against pain, jubilant, triumphant.”

His Majesty's eyes frowned.

“ Methinks the Holy Office lacks a counter-charm. Has it no hooks to root up speech, no blistering gags to choke it ? Bid him construe his words, or suffer worse.”

“ It seems that feeling is dead in him,” said the Father adviser, “ killed like a bird in the hand. He is own brother to Balthazar Gérard, who, after all, was a martyr. But it is just a trick of the spirit, detaching itself from the matter it makes sensitive. Shall I question the man ? ”

Philip waved his hand, and Allen crossed the closet and stood before William Donne, an ingratiatory smile on his lips.

“ Good seaman,” he said, “ what is this same regicidal gnat you chaunt of ? ”

The prisoner jerked up his battered face, hearing a question in his own tongue.

"The gnat," he said in a thick voice, faintly rollicking, "that killed the King."

"Why and how did he kill him?"

An expression of slyness evolved itself from the wrecked features. A parable was quite in keeping with the regenerate privateering of the time.

"The King," said William Donne, "had conquered all the blessed world, from the Orcades to Cape Horn, and then, being puffed-up like, he thought he'd sail for the land of God and conquer that. So he fitted up a fleet of winged carracks and steered for heaven. But was the Almighty disturbed to see the countless host approaching? Not He. He just sent out a single gnat, that flew and crept into the King's ear and stung his brain, burning it to madness, so that there was an end of the expedition; and the fleet went about, crashing together in its confusion, and returned, what was left of it, to the Spanish Main."

A short pause succeeded, and then Allen smiled and nodded.

"To the Spanish Main," he said, "exactly. And the land of God, my friend?"

"What but little England," cried William Donne, "and Drake the jolly gnat?"

The Jesuit turned and interpreted to the King, who, for all his world-dominion, spoke no tongue but his own. His Majesty, caressing his thin beard, answered without emotion: "Well, he hath betrayed his charm. Let the Holy Office get at him at last."

He dismissed the man and the subject with a gesture, and, rising, put a hand upon the priest's shoulder. His eyes glistened with a cold, remote look, as if their pupils contracted to a distant vision.

"It comes, Allen," he said, "it comes—the fruition of our long desire. These news—how spiteful Fate delays them; and yet it can be but a day or so. To grasp that little stronghold of heresy in our hand at last, and dust the tares into the fire. Woe on them that have baulked us in the hour of their triumph! They shall burn, Allen, they shall burn. We will sweep the land with flame, that the after-crop may be rich and virgin. The world surrenders piecemeal to our Christ, the Prince of love and justice. A land of God we'll make it—"

He paused abruptly on the word, and stood staring, his jaw loose. Then rallied, and, breathing out a deep sigh, whispered: "That dog! A blasphemous appropriation!"

We'll show his God of gnats the warrant of the Cross ; we'll dispute his claim, I think. His God !—a Jezebel, a false idol, who sends her ships to poison my new world—mine, decreed of Rome ! A curse upon the gnat ! ”

He appeared of a sudden strangely moved. The gnat's particular humour, indeed, was the sting he most abhorred ; the virus of its memory for ever rankled in his veins. Not eight years was it since this gnat, this Drake, this bold heretic fanatic, had, daring his edict, swept the Spanish Indies and plundered a Spanish galleon of their treasures, loaded with which he had returned to England, to be applauded and knighted by its Queen. Not one year was it since, descending upon Cadiz and the ports of the Faro, this same freebooter had inflicted an almost irreparable blow upon the preparations ripening for the great attack.

The land of God ! The land of the foul fiend rather. But it was all decided at last ; the hour of reckoning was come, and he, Philip, only awaited the news confirmatory to exact his bitter toll for every abuse, for every humiliation, for every insult so long heaped upon him.

Standing there, he recalled a certain letter, in which this Jezebel, this Queen of heretics,

had finally, soon after her accession, rejected the offer of his hand. That had been thirty years ago, but the memory remained, an open wound. She was to answer for it in her "land of God." And Drake! With the venom of a mean nature he lusted to wreak the first of his triumphant hate on the body of the "sea-dog's" chaplain. The wretch's nerves of feeling must be got at somehow; he, Philip, must think of some harrowing method; and in the meantime it would be richly gratifying to disinter that old letter of rejection, and gloat over the reprisals to be exacted for it.

His face transfigured, he released his hold of the priest, and was on the point of moving from the room, when a sudden soft hubbub arising outside arrested him. Always fearful of violence, he hesitated an instant, then, in a spasm of panic, tore aside the hangings. A throng of ashy faces greeted him. Instinctively he read the truth.

"My fleet!" he gasped.

A cowering courtier fell upon his knees before him.

"Destroyed, dispersed, great lord."

"By what—by whom?"

"By shot, by fire, by tempest. The English captains in their privateers swarmed like gnats about the rolling hulks."

“ Like gnats ? Was Drake among them ? ”

“ The first and worst . ”

The King staggered, recovered himself, stiffened, and turned towards his oratory.

“ No more , ” he said. “ I take it kneeling . ”

He moved away stupidly, stopped, turned again, and addressed himself, as if groping, towards the Jesuit :

“ I take it kneeling, I say. The land of God—England—can it be—and I——? ”

Some insect droned in the dead silence ; the King was seen to start, to stoop, to block his ears with his hands.

“ Tell them , ” he said thickly, “ to let the seaman go, in God’s name and the King’s. It is our will . ”

## George Buchanan

TWO boys were quarrelling in the privy garden of Stirling Castle on the Forth. Their shrill little passions rose ludicrously inconsonant with the majestic gravity of the old historic pile. That had its roots deep-striking into the mighty rock from which it had sprung; and, above, every lusty tower, every folded roof, every soaring pinnacle of the massed congeries of hall and chapel and battlement which comprised the royal rookery was a living testimony to the fecundity of the source from which those roots had drunk. Stirling Castle, in common with other impregnable fortresses of its kind, had grown fat and strong, like a strapping vine, on the blood which soaked its bases—so strong that, in this year of stormy grace 1576, it was still the residence confidently appropriated to a regal minor.

The Castle, massive and somnolent, commanded imperturbably from its height the beautiful open champaign—with its meandering river like a silver uncoiled

spring—in the midst of which it was set ; the angry small voices vexed its serenity about as much as a buzzing fly might vex a mammoth. Yet they had this right in common with the great voices of the past ; one of them came from the lungs of a nestling of the right cagle breed.

He, this nestling—the one destined to be our first Stuart monarch—was a stubby, commonplace boy of ten. His face was pale and somewhat meaty, his features were undistinguished in a pawky good-humoured way, his hair was longish and of a bright auburn, which was to deepen later on. Now, under the influence of anger, its roots were flushed red, which gave it an inflamed look, and the young gentleman's close-buttoned doublet was sadly disordered, and its lace torn at the wrists.

And what *was* the subject of dispute, meet to environments so stern and so imposing ? Why just a tame sparrow, which King Jamie was bent on appropriating from his young playmate, the Master of Mar, to whom it had been presented by a diplomatic gardener.

“ Gie it me, Geordie,” cried his Majesty, snatching and struggling. “ I wull hae it. Saul of my body, man, dinna ye ken the voice of royalty ? ”

The other, a ferrety, pink-lidded and ginger-headed boy, lithe but no match in avoirdupois for his thicker-set antagonist, answered only by cries and contortions. In the result, the sparrow changed hands, a crushed and lifeless little body. Geordie broke away, and made, howling, for a certain room in the Castle.

It was a room well known to him, sombre, rude in its scholastic appointments, but with the stony acerbities of its walls somewhat softened by a good lining of books. An old man of seventy, sitting reading by the bare strong table, raised his head as the intruder entered.

“ Ye’ll be comin’ to tell me of some new act of tyranny, Geordie man ? ” he said.

He looked a very shrewd, observant old fellow, in the falling collar and long black tunic and gown of a grammarian. He had a high, bald forehead backing into a sparse crop of hair, like a track losing itself on a hill ; a rough, bulbous nose, and rugged cheeks shaven down to where a thick moustache lost itself in a thicker chin-beard. There were plentiful bags and crow’s-feet about his eyes, which were like bright buttons in soft wrinkled leather.

The boy, thus encouraged, made the utmost of his wrong. In the midst his

Majesty entered, a little shamefaced, but defiant. He condescended to avow his act and to justify it, and he exclaimed on his playfellow for a “snoovin’ tacd,” which was the Scots for sneaking toad.

Papa Buchanan—Majesty’s preceptor—listened very serenely, slipping in a word here and there where the angry brabble permitted it. Probably in the end he would have summed up and dismissed the squabble with a warning, had not Master Jamie, incensed by some hint of correction, muttered just audibly an invitation to anyone to whom the peril of the essay might appeal “to come and bell the cat”—a challenge to which authority, in its own interests, was bound to respond. It did, in fact, respond promptly, with an amazing vigour for its years, and with the pliant persuasion of a leathern “tawse” kept for the purpose; and, when it had done with Majesty, it administered a similar dose to the other disputant, as the shortest way to restoring amity through fellow-suffering.

“Haud your rowt, Geordie, like a gude mannie, and rin awa,” said the breathed pedagogue, as he prepared to sit down and resume his reading. But it was not to be. Attracted by the uproar, the Countess of Mar

—widowed sister-in-law to Mr. Alexander Erskine, the King's present guardian—came hurrying into the room, and gathering, from the position of the royal hand, the true state of the case, caught the vociferous victim into her arms, and, rounding on the grammarian, demanded passionately of him how he dared lay his hands on the Lord's anointed.

“The end justifies the means,” responded the pedagogue coolly. “I marle your ladyship's confusion of pairts. The Lord shall keep to his ain and I to mine.”

“Yours, ye presumptuous fool!” cried the angry woman. “But 'tis time this arrogance ended.”

Master Buchanan, a practised psychologist, decided, in the words of the proverb, to “jouk and let the jaw gae by.” He withdrew.

The King forgot all about his chastisement, and its indignity, in a day or two. But not so the Countess. The act had brought to a head in her a long-swelling process of exasperation. That this audacious pedagogue should dare to claim a privilege denied to his colleagues, when a whipping-boy, common to all of them, was provided in the person of the young Sir Mungo Malagrowther, was simply intolerable. Her

smouldering resentment took fire in a determination to bring this domineering will to its knees. And, as luck would have it, an opportunity seemed quickly given her.

One day her son, the young Master of Mar (who had by no means forgotten, or forgotten to resent, *his* clouting), came to her, triumphant, with some notes which he had picked up while spying about in his absent preceptor's room. These notes were incriminating, they positively smelt of treason, and the Countess was fiercely jubilant. She abode her time.

But Buchanan had in the meanwhile discovered his loss for himself, and, putting this and that together—Geordie's new air of defiance, and his lady mother's conscious looks—had formed a shrewd guess as to the state of affairs.

That day he appeared before the King with a sifflication, or petition, which he desired his young pupil to sign, convinced that the thoughtless, good-natured boy would never trouble to examine into more than its purport. And his surmise was justified.

“What is it a' aboot?” was the indifferent demand.

“Just a bit place at Court, Jamie, my

man," answered the pedagogue, "for a worthy chield, more fitted than mony to adorn his office."

The King signed, and the strategist retired with his spoil.

That night the storm burst. A message reached Buchanan, desiring his immediate attendance in the royal cabinet. He obeyed the summons without hurry, an odd smile on his dry old lips. He found Erskine, the Countess, and the young Master of Mar gathered about the King's chair. Her ladyship lost no time in opening the proceedings.

"D'ye ken those papers, Maister Buchanan?" she cried, flinging the notes down on the table under the pedagogue's nose.

"Vera weel," he answered—"and who stole them from my room?"

"The Lord shall justify the theft," she cried, "since it hath revealed a treason to His anointed."

Erskine, half bored, half amused, bade the pedagogue take up the notes and explain them as he could.

"They are for a work I am projecting," said Buchanan—" *De Jure Regni apud Scotos*—which is just a compendium of poleetical philosophy."

"Read," cried the Countess; and, with-

out hesitation, Buchanan obeyed, giving the whole of what is here only the gist :

“ If a King should do things tending to the dissolution of human society, for the preservation of which he has been made, he is a tyrant, ergo an enemy of all mankind. Is there not a just cause of war against such an enemy, and is it not lawful in such war for the whole people, or one, or any, to kill that enemy ? May not any out of all mankind lawfully kill a tyrant, as one who has broken the bond made between himself and mankind ? ”

“ Haud ! ” cried her ladyship, rabid to seize her point. “ What ca’ ye that, brother, but a direct incitement to treason ? Heard ye aye such seductive blether ! A bond, the deil hae’t ! I tell ye, ye mislared pedant, there’s na bond save between the Lord and His anointed, and whosoever thinks otherwise, or designs in ony way to injure the King, is guilty of treason to the Lord.”

“ I submit,” said Buchanan. “ It is treason to design in ony way to injure the King. Oot of your ain mouth, woman, do you stand convict.”

He took a paper from his pocket and threw it on the table.

“ Read ! ” he commanded, in his turn.

Dumbfounded, but somehow impelled, the Countess lifted the paper, glanced at it, and, uttering a shriek, threw it down before Erskine, who, also perusing it, gave a sudden snort, and handed it, with an amused ironic bow, to the King.

It was a document, signed by his own Majesty, vesting his title and authority for the space of fifteen days in the person of his faithful servant George Buchanan.

The pedagogue, with a stern aspect, advanced, and, motioning the King out of his chair—a dictate which the pupil instinctively obeyed—assumed the vacant place.

“D’ye deny your ain sign-manual, James Stuart ?” he asked.

The boy, looking very sheepish, shook his head.

“It shall be a lesson and a warning to ye, Jamie,” said Buchanan. “How often have I rebuked, and vainly, your complying good-nature ! And now that easy concession has dethroned ye for the nonce, as ane day it may for gude and a’. For the future, read your sifflcations before signing them.” He whipped round suddenly on the small Master of Mar. “As for this young traitor and his mither,” he bawled, “that have conspired to injure their King——”

The Countess cried out, as Geordie ran screaming into her arms, "No treason, gudeman, no treason ! I allow the truth of your contention. It is maist lawful, under just provocation, to dethrone and kill a tyrant."

"Humph!" said Buchanan, twisting into place again. "I am nane, maybe, so convinced of that as I was, and we will e'en leave the point for future discussion. In the meanwhile, as King I decree that the person of ane George Buchanan, *homo multarum literarum*, is sacred from this hour and for ever, and that onyone at ony time conspiring to injure it, shall be adjudged guilty of treason against the King's Majesty."

Alexander Erskine lay back in his chair and went into a roar of laughter.

## The Lord Treasurer

“PHINEAS,” said the Lord Treasurer  
—“my breeches ! ”

The attendant, stooping to the august legs, reverentially relieved them of their small-clothes, and his lordship stood up in his shirt with his back to the fire. Even so denuded, he could never have conceived himself as anything less than a hero to his valet—no, not when, with a comfortable rearward shrug of his shoulders, he lifted the veil of his unspeakableness to the gratifying warmth.

“Let me see, Phineas,” said the Lord Treasurer. “To-morrow is Wednesday—the black velvet with the plain falling band, is it not ? Very well. Empty that pocket of its papers, Phineas.”

“Yes, my lord.”

Sir Richard Weston, Baron of Exchequer and Lord High Treasurer to his Majesty King Charles I, was disrobing for the night in his official residence off Chancellor’s or Chancery Lane. He was a man of inflexible routine, who changed his raiment, parcelled

out his duties, and pigeon-holed his correspondence with an unswerving regularity from which nothing could ever make him deviate but a bribe. He had a suit of clothes for Monday, a suit for Wednesday, another for Friday, and so on—a change on every third day ; and in the doublet of each suit was a little pocket below the waist, into which it was his custom to slip all memoranda of affairs requiring his early attention. This pocket it was the valet's duty to explore upon every occasion of exchange into fresh habiliments.

Now, *system* has this drawback, that it entices those who practise it into a confidence in their inability to err, which is in itself an error. Pigeon-holes are useful things, if one is convinced that every article in them is docketed under its obvious letter. But, alas ! in actual fact the short cut too often proves itself the longest way round, and the pigeon has an amazing way of hiding in the unexpected compartment. He may fail to answer to his own name or his firm's, and leave one in the last resort only his subject or his business by which to trace him—if, indeed, one can identify either under a capital letter. We have known an orderly man to tear the heart out of a nest of pigeon-holes from

“ B ” to “ Z,” only at length to find what he sought under “ Anonymous.” Yet he remained no less convinced than the Treasurer that he had eliminated confusion from his category of affairs. System, in short, may provide against everything but the bad memory which most trusts to it.

Sir Richard, pleasantly conscious of his calves and upwards, reared himself on his toes and yawned and sank down again.

“ Is aught there, varlet ? ” he demanded.  
“ Bring me whatsoever it containeth.”

The man laid down the discarded doublet.

“ Naught, my lord,” he said, “ but a single scrap of paper.”

“ Give it me.”

The servant crossed the room, and presented the memorandum with an obeisance. The master accepted it, glanced down, and stood suddenly rigid.

“ *Remember Cæsar !* ”

That was all—just those two words, written bold in ink in an unknown hand.

“ *Remember Cæsar !* ”

Sir Richard was holding the paper in his right hand ; dropping the veil, he brought his left to the front and stood staring in a sort of stupor. A consciousness as of chill, as of a sense of warmth and security suddenly and shockingly withdrawn, tingled

through his veins. It was succeeded by a faint thrill of grievance or self-pity. He had been so exceedingly comfortable and happy a moment ago.

“Remember Cæsar!”—just those two words, no more, but how voluminous in terrific import! “Remember Cæsar!” Remember the retribution that always waited on “vaulting ambition.” A vision of a vast Senate Hall, of a throng of passionate figures holding aloft blood-stained daggers, of a silent, prostrate form in their midst, rose before him. “Remember Cæsar!” Remember Cæsar’s fate: remember what came to befall the greatest soldier, statesman, jurist of his time—possibly of all time.

A certain flattery in the analogy for an instant restored the colour to Sir Richard’s cheek. Perhaps the comparison was not so extravagant a one after all. The position of Lord Treasurer was so exalted, that, looking down from it, all lesser offices and all lesser men appeared dwarfed. It needed surely a stupendous intellect to preserve its equilibrium at that altitude. And yet, such the height, such the fall. The Treasurer’s momentary heroics came down with an anticipatory thwack which left him gasping.

If he could only avoid Cæsar’s fate while

admitting the soft analogy ! The illustrious Imperator had also, if he remembered rightly, received *his* warning, and had ignored it. To ape the foolhardinesses of the great was surely not to justify one's relation to them in the best sense.

A shrill wind blew upon the casement. Its voice had but now awakened a snug response in the Treasurer's breast. All in a moment it spoke to him of the near approach of the Ides of March, and he shivered and dropped the paper to the floor.

"Phineas," he said in an agitated voice, "Phineas ! How came that into my pocket ? "

The valet, busy about his affairs, approached deferentially but curiously, and, at a sign from his master, lifted and examined the billet, and shook his head.

"You don't know ? "

"No, indeed, my lord."

"How do you read it, man ? How do you read it ? "

Phineas scratched his poll and grinned and was silent.

"You are just an intolerable ass," cried his master. He danced in his excitement. His dignity was all gone ; he was simply a man in a shirt. "Fetch master secretary !" he cried. "Fetch master comptroller !

Rouse the household, and warn the porter at the gate ! Send everyone in to me, here and at once."

The valet hesitated.

" Do you hear ? " shouted Sir Richard.  
" Why do you wait ? "

" It doesn't come down to your knees, my lord," said Phineas.

The Treasurer leaped to a press and tore out a robe. " Go ! " he screamed over his shoulder.

In a minute they all came hurrying in—comptroller, secretary, clerks, grooms, and underlings—in dress or in undress, a motley crew, as the occasion had found them.

" What is it, my lord ? " asked the first in an astonished voice. He was a tall, pallid man, so inured to method and routine that a rat behind the wainscot was enough to throw him into a flutter.

" Master Hugh," cried the Treasurer—" Master Hugh ! I found that in my pocket when I came to strip—a thing that I had never put there, or put unconsciously. What do you make of it, my friend ? What does it import ? "

They all gathered round the comptroller to read the billet, and, having examined it, fell apart with grave, inquiring faces.

The comptroller looked up, his lips trembling.

“ My lord,” he said, “ it can signify but one thing.”

“ My assassination ? ”

“ Without doubt, my lord.”

The Treasurer turned pale to the bare dome of his head. He had to the last hoped to have his worst apprehensions refuted ; but it was plain that only one construction could be put upon the missive.

“ How did it reach me ? ” he said dismally. “ How did it get there ? ”

“ Probably, my lord,” ventured the secretary, a sleek, apologetic man, “ it was slipped into your lordship’s hand by one whom your lordship mistook for a chance importunate suitor, and your lordship accepted and pouched and forgot it.”

“ It may have represented a threat or a friendly warning,” said the comptroller.

“ Your lordship hath many and mighty enemies,” said the secretary, “ as who hath not among the great and influential ? ”

“ Your power, your imperious will, your favour in high places, my lord,” said the comptroller—“ these be all incitements to the envious and unscrupulous. Without question there is some conspiracy formed against your life.”

"I could almost suspect you all of collusion in it," cried the Treasurer bitterly, "for the relish with which you dispose of me."

The comptroller murmured distressfully, "O, my lord, my lord!"

Sir Richard broke out, moved beyond endurance :

"What the devil do you all, moaning and croaking? I am not food yet for your commiseration. The plot may be already forward while you babble. Look under the bed, Phincas."

The valet dived, rose, scoured the room, examined into every possible lurking-place.

"Shall I set a guard, my lord?" inquired the comptroller.

The Treasurer exploded :

"Set a guard when the thief is in! A household of braying jackasses! Go, dolt, and remedy your oversight. Shut the gates and warn the porter; beat up every hole and corner first. See that not a soul is allowed entrance on any pretext whatever. And, hark ye, Master Hugh, no eye to-night shall be shut on penalty of my high displeasure. An unwinking vigil, an unwinking vigil, Master Hugh, on the part of all. See to it. And if anyone asks an audience, save of the first consequence and

character, I am indisposed, Master Hugh—I am indisposed, do you hear ? ”

He was so, in very truth, as he drove them all out, and locked the door upon himself, and sank into a seat before the fire. A sickness of apprehension stirred in his bile and made his face like yellow wax. This business had given him such a shock as he had never before experienced. What did it mean ?—what could it mean ? No doubt the secretary’s theory was the right one : he was incessantly being importuned by petitioners, and often, to get rid of them, he would accept their memorials, and pocket and forget all about them. So must it have been with this paper, thrust into his hand amidst a crowd. It was merciful chance alone that had restored it to his notice before too late. But, accepting all that, *why* was his life threatened ? His heart was full of an emotional complaint and protest against destiny. He was not an unjust man as things went—certainly not so signally as to merit this fatal distinction.

He passed a terrible night, shrinking from every shadow, starting at every sound. Morning when it came only added to his sick perplexity. What course was he to pursue, fearful of the lurking terror, to

preservc his dignity and his lisc at once ? He dressed in a sort of mental palsy, crept breakfastless to his library, and sent for the comptroller's report. So far, it appcared, the night had passed without event. No doubt the deed was destined for the open air.

As he stood, trying to deliberate his policy, a visitor, the Earl of Tullibardine, was announced as craving an audience. His lordship was a personal friend of his, and beyond suspicion. Reluctantly Sir Richard gave the order for his admittance.

The nobleman came in breezily, and with much concern expressed over the report of the Treasurer's indisposition. " Which," said he, " maketh me loth to trouble your lordship on a personal matter, which, saving the pressure of the occasion, I would forbear. But the business calls for dispatch, and your lordship had promised me an answer."

Sir Richard put a hand to his forehead.

" Not well," he murmured, " and over-taxed. You must pardon me, my lord. What business ? "

" Why," cried the Earl, " have you forgot how you promised me three days ago to speak to the King about appointing my kinsman, Robert Cæsar, to a vacant

clerkship of the Rolls, and how, asking me for a memorandum of the matter, I writ '*Remember Cæsar*' on a slip of paper and gave it you ? ”

Sir Richard stood staring a moment, then burst into an uproarious laugh.

## The Princess Elizabeth

She was really the most affectionate and harmless of little princesses, though, in the cruelty of her fate, one of the most tragic figures of her sad time. Destiny, the great bully, in the absence of any celestial S.P.C.C., often delights in torturing good children, and surely he had never vented his spite on a prettier innocence than this. She was born on the Holy Innocents' day, actually; and that may have prejudiced the odious tyrant. A counterpane of snow covered the earth at the time, and when the sun of the New Year withdrew it, there was this smiling snowdrop underneath.

We pass over the little Princess's first reception, the splendour and hyperbole of it all. To insist on such in such connection is like breaking a butterfly on a wheel. She was for all human purposes just a desirable baby, most precious in her lovable disposition; and if the States of Holland thought fit, for political purposes, to signalise her minute advent by a con-

gratulatory present to King Charles I, her father, of ambergris, incomparable china, a cunning clock, and several Titians and Tintorettos, those gifts were not to be considered representative of anything but her material values. Her real dearness was moral and inestimable. Only the ambergris, perhaps, symbolised the sweetness of her nature.

We dwell on her sweetness, the kind little soul, more fondly than on her reputed learning and her piety. At eight years old she was said, on the authority of Mrs. Makin, her parliamentary governess, to be suitably proficient, Angelica-like, in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, Italian, and Spanish, all of which languages she could read and write. Well, we don't believe a word of it, any more than we believe in the precocious pietism allowed her by godly Mr. Stephen Marshall and other long-winded Fifth-Monarchists appointed by the Parliament to preach her and her brothers into a state of dead-with-sleepiness grace. Like a sweet-natured child she struggled dutifully to please her tutors, and the very love in her disarmed and moved them to the utterance of those fond fictions. No doubt she could stammer without a solecism of Balbus and his wall-building, or,

in childish cacography, indite her *Dème un beso* with little rosy fist cramped tight and her lips pursed to the message. But that any tongue but her own spoke naturally in or to her we will not believe.

The most prettily pathetic letter ever written by a child she addressed to the Lords of the Parliament, and that was in 1642, when she was really eight years old. It was at the time when King father and Queen mother were gone, launched on the flood of that long disaster, and Elizabeth and her baby brother, the little Duke of Gloucester, had been left together in the great empty Palace of St. James's under the guardianship of the Houses. It was a period of tense national emotion—the opening of the great Civil War. The two children, who figured more or less as hostages, were a source of perpetual anxiety and embarrassment to the revolted Commons, who could not forbear, nevertheless, imposing upon the twain their own loveless ruling. The infants were stripped of all privileges of State, were maintained meagrely, and were delivered to the dronings of orthodox divines for their spiritual sustenance. It being decreed that none, unless he were a subscriber to the Solemn League and Covenant, should be

permitted to hold any office about them, the cashiering of most of the household followed of necessity. And it was this, the dismissal of her few loved familiars, which produced the letter. The child, in a burst of passionate grief, appealed from the Lower to the Upper House :

“ MY LORDS,

“ I account myself very miserable that I must have my servants taken from me, and strangers put to me. You promised me that you would have a care of me, and I hope you will show it, in preventing so great a grief as this would be to me. I pray, my Lords, consider of it, and give me cause to thank you, and to rest,

“ Your loving friend,

“ ELIZABETH.”

Your loving friend ! No polyglot precocity there, but just the stumbling iterative language of a child's swelling heart. Cannot you picture her, in her plain black frock and falling collar, her slim arms bare from the elbow, the shining golden curls dropping over her cheeks and the shining tears dropping from her eyes, as she sits at the long table in the bare panelled room carefully shaping the characters of her desperate

little plea. Her throat has a lump in it ; her breath catches from time to time ; so almost does ours, when we think of her, as of any other imprisoned child, so lonely, so non-understanding, deprived in one amazed moment of all love and luxury, conscious of vague frightening things around, awake, as if in the night, from a terror of dreams, and no one, no least footstep in the dark house, hurrying to her with reassurance of comfort and soothing words.

But we would not overpaint the picture ; and indeed this little girl had the compensations of her nature. Few could be harsh with her or help loving her—not Mrs. Makin, nor Mr. Obadiah Sedgewick, who knew so much about the Bible that he might have written it, especially its wrathful passages, nor certainly the Earl of Northumberland, who was the guardian appointed by the Houses. Moreover, being of the stuff maternal, she had natural duties to occupy her. She had mothered her dolls, very lovingly and intimately, in the times of absorbing unreality ; now, awakened to the tremendous responsibilities of fact, her solicitude was transferred to their living substitute, the little baby Duke Henry of Gloucester. In her pretty, faithful stewardship of this small charge she

forgot the worst of her own grief and loneliness.

We would dilate upon her maternal resourcefulness, for in that was her natural development. It came to embrace in time the fortunes of her elder brother, the Duke of York, who, when he was thirteen and she eleven, was added to the party at St. James's. In the interval Elizabeth had had a fall and broken one of her legs, an accident which, though surmounted, had further weakened an already delicate constitution. And then events came fast, culminating, after many disastrous defeats, in the virtual imprisonment of the King father at Hampton Court. There was a day which the little Princess never forgot, when all three were taken to visit the captive in his prison-palace. They slept the night there, and the tramp of the sentries in the long corridor got upon her nerves and haunted them for weeks afterwards. It seemed so dreadful that a king should have a gaoler.

But now affairs were rushing to a crisis, and the alarmed heart of the child-mother inspired her to action. In this threatening of a dynasty it was imperative to secure the escape of her elder boy brother, and she set herself, the little courageous thing, to devise the means. Love made of her

a very Machiavellian plotter, made of her small wits a counter-force against all the watchfulness and caution of great Ministers and their servants. Very innocently—in seeming—she prepared her ground: the three children, to beguile the tedium of their long confinement, took to playing hide-and-seek in the great empty Palace every evening after dark. And on the 21st of April, in the year 1648, the plot was ripe.

“I will not hide to-night, Harry.”

“Yes, Jamie, do, do.”

“Will you not, Jamie dear, to please him?”

“Why not you, sister? With your sad raiment, toning into the hangings and the shadows, you have always the advantage over us.”

“But you have the better ideas. You shall wear one of my gowns if you like.”

“Shall I? Then I shall be doubly equipped. Very well, send for a gown.”

Amid the laughter of all, governess and attendants, assembled in the room, the young Prince became a girl. Little Harry was delighted, and clapped his hands.

“Find me 'to-night, Harry, if you can,” cried the Duke of York as, holding up his skirts, he danced out of the room. “I will take ten minutes' law, and then give you two hours for the task.”

He disappeared; Elizabeth had hard ado to hold in the child the stipulated time; but punctually on the tick of the eleventh minute she rose, and took his hand, and the hunt began.

There was always a fearful joy in this sport for the little boy. The vast glooms; the imagined crouching shapes; the starts and shrieks of discovery over some object which would reveal itself when approached—no dim, half-shrouded face, but just a ghostly bowl or ornament; the crawling silences and puckered shadows—the appalling venture of it all was just endurable if one kept the prize in view. And then this elder brother did such things. Once, actually, standing on a mantelpiece, he had become the figure of a pale-faced Moroni Cavalier, whose picture hung convenient; and Elizabeth and little Hal had passed and repassed hand in hand without ever discovering the imposition. And to-night again, it seemed, was to record one of his inspirations.

Long before the two hours were passed in fruitless search Harry was so tired that he could scarce drag one foot after the other. But he was still trailing his weary toes undaunted when the Earl came home, prepared to attend the Princes to bed,

Elizabeth, by then worn out, had transferred her place in the hunt to a couple of menservants, who, amused and unsuspecting, accompanied the little boy.

Northumberland, being informed that the Duke was hiding, tarried impatiently awhile, until, seeing his growing irritation, one of the servants whispered to his charge. The child, brightening and clapping his hands, shrieked out, "O, Jamie! In the gardener's house!" The Earl turned on the speaker.

"What is that?"

"His Highness," answered the man, "ran into the servants' hall, demanding of Job his key to hide withal. He's been there, my lord, these two hours."

"There? Where?"

"In Job's lodge in the garden, my lord."

The Earl, hastily calling his attendants, hurried, the little boy trotting beside him, to the house—only to find it empty and the bird flown. Undetected in his disguise, the young Duke, after slipping from the window of the lodge into the darkness without, had made his way down to the river, where, at a certain spot, by preconcerted arrangement, a boat awaited to convey him to a Dutch vessel. And the demure deviser of all this pretty scheme had been from first to last the little good Princess.

She looked up when the Earl came to acquaint her of the result of their evening's play. Her eyes filled ; her lips quivered ; but she was too long inured to shocks to express surprise.

"He hath fled, then," she said. "I can only pray, sir, for his preservation. Yet be sure you have left no corner unexplored."

Northumberland convinced her, even as he turned away. There was a puzzled frown in his eyes.

"No, it is impossible," he whispered to himself. "Was she not born on the feast of the Holy Innocents ? "

A big heart in a frail body. She came to die, this tired little lamb, really of neglect and loneliness, when she was no more than fifteen. Emotional pietists have declared that she was found dead with her head resting on the Bible. So short-sighted people can mistake for a book the Good Shepherd's knee.

## James II

THE City clocks were chiming four in the starry chill of a December morning as the King and his two attendants hurried down Whitehall stairs to the river. A boat, bespoken hours earlier by his valet Abbadie, who was in waiting for the party, lay ready off the public steps. These, for an obvious reason, had been chosen in preference to the privy stairs, and the result seemed to justify the precaution. The fugitives were not observed or followed, it appeared—unless any significance attached to the form of a sleeping loafer, sprawled heavily over a baulk of timber hard by—and in any case they were all prepared, if challenged, to assume the rôle of belated citizens taking boat after a frolic.

The two oars, proved men, were, if not in the actual secret of the escape, sufficiently near it to act in all things with quiet and dispatch. The embarkation proceeded noiselessly, and Sir Edward Hales, the last of the party, was about to step on board,

when a remark, *sotto voce*, from one fellow to the other arrested his attention. He paused, his foot on the gunnel, and quickly demanded an explanation.

“Why, see, your honour,” said the man in a low voice, “you’re over-late, and the tide’s at the slack. With a pull of thirty miles before us and a heavy boat, it’s odds but we meet the flow this side Greenwich.”

“What, then, waterman?”

“We shan’t fetch Gravesend before daylight, that’s all.”

Sir Edward, being a faithful Papist and Jacobite, cursed ecumenically. Ex-Lieutenant of the Tower, he had only just been dispossessed of his post, a significant one, by dictate of the usurper, and Fate, he felt, might have spared him these lesser vexations. It was important above all things at this pass to get the King bestowed under cover of darkness in the vessel that awaited him at the river-mouth.

“Where two failed, three might succeed, eh?” he said sharply.

The man acquiesced. “Pulling randan we might do it,” he said—“two oars and the sculls.”

Abaddie, the valet, was a loyal but fibreless French dandyprat; Mr. Sheldon, the fourth of the party, was old and infirm;

was it to be left to him, Sir Edward, a man of a large and weighty dignity, to set his back to a task about which he knew perhaps just enough to confound the efforts of the others ? He hesitated ; and, as he stood, a voice sounded behind him :

“ Here’s at your service, master.”

Sir Edward started and turned round. It was the sleeper, it seemed, who had risen and come behind him unobserved—an immense shambling figure of a man, ragged and hoary. Power no less than age spoke in his massive frame, in his hands like roots, in his sinewy neck. Even the few teeth that remained to him were like bones of contention in a resolute jaw. Shadowy, a dim giant, he stood up in his mouldy duds in the starlight.

An opportune phantom, too foul and solitary for a spy. Sir Edward, under stress of urgency, took what the Fates had sent him.

“ Can you pull ? ” he asked only.

The great creature jeered hoarsely.

“ Aye,” he said, “ though it were the house of Dagon about the cars of the Philistines.”

Sir Edward made a wry mouth ; there was a tang in this of the pietistic cant he was old enough to remember. But the occasion was urgent.

“ We desire to light at Gravesend before dawn,” he said. “ You shall be well paid if you enable us.”

He entered the boat, and the man followed, the latter signifying in a determined manner that he would pull stroke. The concession being made to a certain arrogance of will in the fellow as much as to his physical strength, they took their seats and the craft put off.

The four passengers were all in cloaks and unfeathered hats. The King, unconscious, it seemed, of the addition to their number, or of the brief parley which had led to it, sat next the water, dark, silent, preoccupied. They had hardly reached midstream when he put his hand over the side, and something slid from it into the flood without splash or sound. As he recovered his position with a sigh, his eyes encountered those of the new-comer, and he started slightly and spoke under his breath :

“ Who is this ? ”

“ A figure of exigency, sir,” whispered Sheldon, “ hired to speed us the quicker to an end. A supplementary hand and a strong one was needed, it seems, to bring us under night to our goal.”

His Majesty said no more, but his eyes, hollow and tragic, continued to con the

stranger. He seemed to him to have arisen, like a sudden cloud, huge and menacing, against the dim horizon of his hopes. That had not ceased to glimmer faintly, to his mind's strained vision, through all the gloom of this long bitter night. A haunting sense of unreality pursued and half stupefied him. He felt like one in an enchanted wood, always sighting deliverance and always mistaken, yet drawn on by perpetual expectation. There had been something fantastic and illusory in this rapid vanishing of a kingdom ; it seemed even now a myth, a jest. He would wake presently and laugh over the strangeness of that very vivid dream. It had been the oddest experience to feel State, authority, service, friendship, a throne, a people, all suddenly slipping from him, as if the bottom, in one unexpected moment, had come out of his universe ; to feel himself, when in a condition of normal security, all at once, as in a nightmare, standing exposed and reviled, an alien not only in his own Court, but in his own country. The thing seemed too preposterous for belief, like the fantasy of a dead man witnessing in substance his own funeral, and he existed and moved in the constant expectation of the strange cloud's dispelling. These

shadows of the few faithful who remained to him would explain themselves and their insignificance ; the flight by icy starlight would merge itself into the confused flow of a dream ; the very curdling of the water would become the ropy web of moisture over sleeping eyeballs. Steadily he had kept his vision concentrated on that line of dawn which was to end the long delusion, and when the new shape rose to block it he felt suddenly as if his hope were overcast, and he awoke at length to full consciousness of the truth. From that moment, for some unknown reason, he despaired.

The boat was sped on its course by muscular arms. The regular pump of the oars, churning up liquid gold, the flight of house and palace, vast hilly hulks of shadow that fled behind them into vaster glooms, the silence and the stress seemed to hypnotise the party, so that none spoke or moved. But the eyes of the King, fixed and haggard, never left the face of the nearest oarsman. Even when, with a dive and rush, they shot into the stream that thundered under London Bridge, his gaze did not falter or withdraw itself for a moment. But presently, when they hove into the weltering shadow of the Tower, as if in an uncontrollable impulse he leaned forward, and,

touching the stranger on the knee, spoke : “ You guess what destinies you carry, my friend ? ”

Sir Edward Hales started and put out an expostulatory hand ; but the great thing, never ceasing in his labours, only mowed and nodded.

“ Aye,” he said, “ I knew you from the first, James Stuart.”

The King sat back, stiff and motionless.

“ No traitor ? ” he demanded rigidly.

The man gave a short laugh.

“ No traitor to my own principles,” he said, “ which are to free Judæa of the last of thy house and dynasty.”

Sir Edward ground out a killing oath ; but the King silenced him. Here was evidently a survival of the fierce fanaticism of the 'forties, and still unappased by the blood of an ancient holocaust. It seemed a significant, an ominous chance to have encountered him at this pass. A profounder dejection settled upon James's heart. He spoke as if appealing :

“ You wish us gone, my friend ? ”

“ Aye,” said the creature, “ I wish you gone.”

“ For what reason ? ”

“ So that I may live again.”

“ Live ? ”

“ Other than as the scapegoat that bore upon his head the iniquities of the unclean. For twenty-eight years have I sojourned in the desert, nameless, hungry, and abhorred—I, that delivered Judah of her sins. Yet the hour is mine at last. The elect shall receive and justify me. Thy deposition is my restoration, James Stuart. Judge if I rejoice to speed thee on thy way.”

“ Mad,” snapped Sir Edward shortly.

The midmost sculler, without stopping pulling, put in his oar, so to speak :

“ Let the ranter mouth, master, so he keeps his fists shut on his task and swings to ‘t.’ ”

“ Not so mad, either,” retorted the giant. Continuing to pull with his left hand, he flung out his right towards the dark blot of the Tower shrinking behind them. “ It fades, King,” he cried—“ the symbol of thy sovereignty, the shambles sanctified by the blood of Freedom’s martyrs. Harrison, Coke, Peters, and the rest—remember them in the day of thy tribulation, since the Lord hath made of their servant and right hand the instrument of His retribution. They died to testify ; but the instrument remains to extirpate. It shall be acclaimed and honoured henceforth in the temples of the Lord.”

The prospect seemed somehow to goad him to more furious exertions ; the boat groaned under his strokes. A madman, no doubt, and best humoured and disregarded. He did not speak again, and in silence the journey was continued. Only an oppression as of death sat upon the heart of the King, and his eyes for ever sought behind the great rocking figure some sign of the dawn that his soul so desired and his interests so feared.

But they drove, unpursued and unmolested, down the starry flood ; and presently the waters broadened and there blew a little sea-breeze among the scattered shipping. And suddenly Sir Edward Hales, intently alert, gave a sharp low order, and they ran under the counter of a small unobtrusive vessel lying at anchor in the midstream. There were white faces here looking over the bulwarks, and, down in the chains, hands ready to support the fugitives aboard. Then his Majesty, having mounted, and before he turned to withdraw, bade Sir Edward reward his boatmen with a liberal vail, which duty the knight performed. But, even as he received his tribute, and the boat drifted away, the hoary giant rose in his place and cast the money into the water.

“ I am paid a thousandfold,” he roared, “ in the extirpation of thy race.”

The King, with a ghastly face, leaned forward.

“ In God’s name, who are you ? ” he cried.

The answer came back, mad and jubilant, across the widening interval :

“ Ask me who I was, and I reply, Lieutenant-Colonel Joyce, who cut off the King your father’s head upon the scaffold.”

## The King's Champion

“**A**ND now, schentelman, about that little inzident at the goronation ? ” It was his Majesty King William III who spoke, crumpled back into his big chair. His eyes, bright as a sparrow’s, peered from the nest of an enormous wig. His small, shrewd features, diminutive frame, and legs like cribbage-pegs, were the least adapted, one might have thought, to carry the extravagant vesture of his day. He appeared, indeed, to be always lost in it, and as if just on the point of finding his way out. Yet the clothes of a Daniel Lambert would hardly have sufficed for his spirit.

The Marquis of Halifax, his Lord Privy Seal, smiled, and shrugged his stout shoulders deprecatingly. There were four others present in this his Majesty’s somewhat melancholy little Cabinet at Whitehall: Lord Denby, his President of the Council, and three solemn Dutch mynheers—D’Auverquerque, Schomberg, and Zuylestein, who had been appointed respectively the

King's Masters of Horse, Ordnance, and the Robes. These last were all as grave as mustard-pots, and the subject, long-expected and broached at last, made them graver.

It turned upon an incident, slight in itself, significant only in its context, which had struck a discordant note in the tremendous ceremonial of the day before. When the King's Champion, riding in by the great door of Westminster, had cast his gage upon the floor, offering to prove in person upon the body of whomsoever should challenge the right of King William and Mary his Queen to reign as sovereign inheritors of the realm that that same dissentient lied in his throat and was a false traitor, a most unexpected response had followed. A little old lady, dressed in a watered tabby and mittens, and having large spectacles on her nose and a stiff three-storied *commode* of lace perched on her white hair, had darted from among the spectators, and, whipping up the steel glove, had returned it to the Champion with a whispered word or two, and then fairly run away, melting into the crowd which thronged about the entrance before anyone could think of interposing.

The affair had caused a momentary stir,

and even a titter, instantly subdued to the august occasion, as Sir Charles Dymoke, the Champion, had ridden up the Hall, his face as red as fire, to deliver and re-deliver his cartel.

But it had not passed unobserved by the King himself or by those around him. Extinguished as he had appeared to be in his panoply of purple and ermine and embroidered scarlet, looking, as he had risen at the great table to drink his Champion's health, for all the world like a little over-swaddled Greek icon elevated against a background of glittering stained glass, his diminutive Majesty had had an ear and an eye for everything within the longest range of either. His birdlike optics, bright as twin buttons sunk amid that pomp of raiment, had been fully cognisant of the little episode, and had watched the after-approach of his Champion with an unwinking interest, which had seemed to concentrate itself to such a challenging focus on the flushed face of the knight as he came near, that that doughty Paladin had fallen into confusion and had something botched the business of the toast that followed. However, he had managed, though crestfallen, to retire presently with sufficient aplomb and his perquisite of a

golden beaker ; and there for the moment the matter had ended.

“ Sir Charles Dymoke——” began Lord Halifax.

“ Who is dat man ? ” interrupted the King. “ Vat is his title to the bost ? ”

“ It is claimed by him, sire,” answered the peer, “ in his right of the Manor of Scrivelsby. The office was originally deputed, I understand, to Sir Richard de Marmyon by the Conqueror, and hath descended by virtue of that tenure to this day. Sir Charles is its legitimate representative.”

“ Well,” said the King, “ brouduce him before us.”

“ Why,” said the Marquis feebly, “ that is the odd thing. Sir Charles is nowhere to be found.”

The three Dutch mynheers uttered guttural sounds in their throats, and looked at one another and at the King significantly.

His Majesty’s brows knotted.

“ Dat is very vonny,” he said. “ Not to be vound, mein vrent ? ”

“ It has been ascertained, your Majesty,” said Lord Denby wearily—he was a picked white bone of a man, with no stomach and yet a perpetual stomach-ache, which naturally aggrieved him—“ that Sir Charles

rode, immediately after the ceremony, to the 'Cock' hostelry in Tothill Street, whence, having disengaged himself of his panoply, he continued his way to the riding-school of one Dobney, near Islington, where he delivered up his horse and disappeared. Since when he has neither returned to his inn nor vouchsafed the least token of his existence."

The King considered the matter very glumly within himself. It appeared a trifle; yet trifles might easily be underestimated in the existing state of things. The incident was something or nothing—a mere meaningless frolic, or a challenge to his title bearing a certain significance. The land swarmed with Jacobites of more or less power and prominence. What if one of them were to meet and defeat his Champion? How, in that event, would his claim stand? What was the procedure? It was an odd contingency, and he put it rather acridly to my Lord Privy Seal.

"He drow de gage; anodder agcept it; dey vight; my man vall. Vat is to vollow?" he demanded.

"Ja! Dat is vat strike idself into me bom-bom," said Schomberg the warrior.

Lord Halifax smiled rather sheepishly.

He was a large, tolerant soul of sixty, repudiating all sentiment and subject to much. He had been called the "Trimmer"; but, then, no man of humour can ever be a man of convictions. Kind, witty, and cynical, he was yet so fond of Reason that he could make a fool of himself with her. He was even worked upon to do so in the present case.

"There is positively no precedent, sire," he said. "To my certain knowledge the thing has never happened before."

"Bot zhould it jost zo happen?" insisted his master.

"Ach!" said D'Auverquerque penetratingly.

"With deference, sire," said his lordship, "is it not something premature to assume any hostile intent in the matter? The good lady——"

"Posh!" put in the King irritably. "Neither goot nor lady."

"Zo it strike itself into mein head bom-bom," said Schomberg.

"Dat dress vas a masquerade," said William—"a vact we zhould haf gonsidered, blain to the stupidest indelligence."

"Certainly, certainly," agreed Lord Halifax nervously.

“ Vell, sir—vat den ? ”

“ Ach ! vat den ? ” demanded D’Auverquerque cunningly.

“ I vill dell your lordship,” said Schomberg. “ Dere was a vine swordsman gonzcaled under dose bettigoats.”

The Lord Privy Seal, considering the subject, woke to a certain trepidation.

“ It is impossible,” he admitted, “ to avoid attaching a measure of importance to the affair, or to gauge its consequences should it be carried through. Surely Sir Charles could not be so foolish as to risk a serious encounter ? But he must be found and warned at all costs.”

His mood communicated itself to the others. The matter began to assume with them all an increasingly sinister aspect. Majesty was not yet so safe on its throne that omens could be disregarded. The King, prompt and tireless, for all his sickly constitution, in business—the little man who was to regain for England her reputation for workaday sanity—had yet, at this beginning, a vast estate to recover from chaos, and his path was beset with perils. The country was still in two minds, and each distracted ; a trifle might upset the balance. Deliberating in this sort, a species of hysteria communicated itself after a time from

one to another of the little Council, until it definitely came to perceive in the episode a daring ruse for bringing about a reaction in popular sentiment. What if the meeting were actually to occur, and the Champion to be overthrown ? It was not to be doubted that the event would have been provided for, and those engaged in bringing it about forearmed. Defeat might result in riot, and riot in revolution. Arrived at that pitch of the debate, the six gentlemen, including his Majesty, were all speaking together in considerable agitation.

It was the personality of the mysterious Mohock, once convicted of masculinity, which most exercised their minds. He was certainly an individual of importance, as so momentous a mission would hardly have been entrusted to a nonentity. But who ? A dozen names suggested themselves, Berwick, Tyrconnel, Lord Henry Fitzjames, the ex-monarch's natural son, Marlborough himself, and others. It was Zuylestein, speaking for the first and last time, who finally put the spark to all this accumulating tow. "Vat," he said, "if it is James himself, zegretly gom over from St. Germains and resolved upon venturing dis bigduresque abbeal to de public ? "

"Bom-bom !" said Schomberg.

He rose, Halifax rose, they all rose, and faced the King.

“ *Ik dank U, mijnheer,*” said his Majesty ; “ it is a very blausible suggestion.”

The words were equivalent to a bid to action. The Council broke up hurriedly, and within an hour the Dutch troops had been beaten to arms, the militia called out, the magistrates warned, and the whole city placed under a surveillance of the most searching description. It was at this momentous pass, when panic was in the air, that Sir Charles Dymoke walked unconcerned into the “ *Cock* ” tavern, in Tothill Street, and was immediately arrested by the guard set to watch that hostelry, and conveyed in a state of complete stupefaction to Whitehall. He was taken at once before the King sitting in Council.

“ *Vere haf you been ?* ” demanded William sternly.

“ Your Majesty ! ” gasped the Champion, a sturdy gallant of middle age.

“ Answer, sir,” said the monarch—“ and vidout equivocation.”

“ I have been with a friend,” stammered Sir Charles, all amazement.

“ Ach ! ” exclaimed his Majesty sarcastically. “ The vrow, vas it, vat returnt you your gage in the Hall yesterday ? ”

"Certainly not, sire," said the Champion, the flush of outrage on his cheek.

"Not?" said the King. "Who vas she, den, dat woman?"

"The wife of Dobney, the horse-tamer, sire."

"The vife—vat! Vat had she said to you?"

"She said, your Majesty, 'Didn't I warn you not to throw it down in front of her nose, unless you want her to kneel and pick it up?'"

"She? Who?"

"The mare, sire. She performs at Islington."

"Your Majesty," said the Lord Privy Seal very softly, "shall we thank Sir Charles and proceed to the order of the day?"

"Bom-bom!" said Schomberg under his breath.

## George I

“HALT!” The voice of an officer rang out in the heavy twilight, and with a sudden scream of brakes and jangle of harness the cavalcade came to a stand.

“Tell the Herr von Gastein his Majesty desires to speak with him.” The name ran up the long line, quick and sharp, like a rattle of musketry, and passed out of hearing of him who had uttered it. “Tell the Herr Captain to come at once.”

The Herr Captain was already, on the word, spurring back from the head of the cortège, which was of royal extent. It stood upon a flat road in a flat country, covering more ground than and including almost as many human souls as a modern mail-train. There was the King’s coach for principal item—a veritable little room slung on straps and drawn by eight horses ; and there were carriages—seven or eight, and each holding as many people—for his retinue, and baggage-wagons, and a troop of fifty sabres to escort the whole. It took

so much, or more, to carry this little corpulent apoplectic on his annual visit to Herrenhausen, whither he had already travelled to within a league or so of Osnabrück and a much-needed night's rest.

The Captain von Gastein, having dismounted and thrown his reins to a groom, stood at stiff attention by the coach door. He was a patient, somewhat exhausted-looking man of fifty, spare-bodied, and with stone-blue eyes which rather matched the dusty Hanoverian blue of his uniform. His expression at the moment was one of a quiet fatality, as if the summons had not been altogether unforeseen by him.

A preternatural silence seemed to have succeeded the tumult of hoofs and wheels. There was a soundless blink of lightning in the sky, and a windmill on the flat roadside blackened and paled alternately in its flicker, as if it palpitated. It was late June, and the air seemed to have come out of a limekiln. The dust rolled up into it began to settle down sluggishly.

The door of the great travelling-coach opened, and a little bewigged gentleman, who had been peering from behind the glass, descended. His manner was dry, self-important, professional; he was the King's English physician.

“ His Majesty, my dear Captain,” he whispered, “ is in a strange mood. You are commanded to ascend and converse with him—you may guess why. The affair of last year—you understand ? Old associations are reawakened, old injuries re-exposed—you were intimately acquainted with their subject. Bear in mind that this sad event has interposed itself between his last departure from and his present revisit to his paternal dominions, and venture upon nothing in the nature of a reminder. If you find him fanciful, excited——”

A querulous voice, breaking from the interior of the carriage, interrupted him :

“ Der Herr Jesus ! What is all this chatter ? Tell the man to enter.”

The physician, placing a warning finger on his lips, skipped to one of the supplementary coaches ; the Captain von Gastein climbed into the royal vehicle. A postillion put up the steps ; the door was closed, the word given, and the cavalcade lurched on. “ Sit,” motioned the King ; and the Herr Captain, with what steadiness he could command, settled himself on the edge of the broad seat backing upon the horses, and awaited, rigid and upright.

He was quite alone with his Majesty, and there was plenty of room for them both.

The interior of the coach was like a cabinet, and luxuriously upholstered. There were accommodations for writing, card-playing, shaving, coffee-making, and other conveniences. The pace was leisurely, the motion restful; the great wheels turned outside the windows with little apparent sound. The King of England lay in his padded corner opposite, a very weary, moodish little old man. His cheeks bagged, his eyes goggled, strained, and anxious; the silk travelling-cloak in which he was wrapped only partly concealed his immense corpulence, and his thick legs and stumpy feet dangled short of the floor. His head was unwigged, and enveloped in a close cap with a fur border which came down over his eyes.

The officer, observant of everything, for all the respectful rigidity of his vision, could not but be conscious of a certain feeling of repulsion in this his first close contact with the prince to whose unwelcome service, in one most tragic direction, he had devoted the best twenty-five years of his life. Twenty-five years it was since he had been ordered, a young impecunious captain, to the lonely Castle of Ahlden on the Aller, where lived, already seven years incarcerated, the beautiful young wife of the then electoral Prince

George—Sophia Dorothea, accused, rightly or wrongly, of misconduct with a Swedish adventurer. She was fair ; unhappy ; her husband had not loved her ; the cold cruelty of his temperament had been confessed in this his consignment of her to a living grave. Had she not lain in his arms, borne him children ? Gastein had needed no more to inflame his chivalry. Thenceforth he had given himself to the service of this lady, to ameliorate, to the best of his power, her bitter fate. His partiality, his sympathy, being, no doubt, reported, had kept him poor and unpromoted. For a quarter of a century he had shared his princess's exile, and had only returned to the world when death had ended that, less than a twelve-month ago. After thirty-two years ! And this was the unlovely Rhadamanthus who had condemned her, this little, wheezy, pot-bellied old frog of a man, who had become Elector of Hanover and King of England in the interval ! The Captain had been educated to the right divine succession ; but something monstrous in the picture struck him. His convictions and his emotions hurt one another in their efforts at a reconciliation. It was somehow not right that tragic beauty should lie at the mercy of this commonplace. He sat as stiff as a ramrod.

It is one of the most grotesque privileges of royalty to command silence. No one must address it unless addressed. Then, at its word, its gesture, the empty brass pot ceases to tinkle or the golden vessel overflows. This seems an unnatural impost, like taxing a man's daylight or his drinking-water. It gives an uncanny self-possession to the mortal who levies it. The little swollen tub of a creature, glowering in his corner, mutely discussed the figure opposite for as long as it pleased him, with no more concern, probably less, than he would have shown in regarding a black-beetle ; and when he spoke at last it was even with some grudging in his cold, guttural voice.

“ You are of the escort, then, mein Herr ? ”

The Captain, stiffening yet a trifle, saluted. “ As your Majesty commanded,” he said.

The other shrugged fretfully.

“ I am glad,” he said, “ to find something surviving to your sense of duty.”

Von Gastein made no answer. He ought not ; he could not, indeed. That sense of warring emotions hurt him like a violent indigestion.

The King, for some minutes, condescended to speak no more, but sat looking out of the

window upon the darkening flats and the white ribbon of the road reeling under him. What was in his mind ? He had always declared, for some reason, that he would not long survive his wife ; and she had died six months ago. Had he somehow cheated Fate—or might he have cheated it had he remained in England ? This was his first visit to his patrimony since her death. Her death, her released spirit—turn the coach !

No, his beloved Herrenhausen ! The stout little Guelph was no coward for all his love of life and good-living. A murrain on this old wives' trash of spectres and premonitions ! He glanced at the figure opposite—it sat up rigid and grey like a signpost—and, with a scowl, looked out of the window again.

Thirty-two years—a woman of sixty, and she had been a fresh, blooming young wife of twenty-eight when he had consigned her to her living death ! Much water, as they said in England, had flowed under London Bridge during that interval—the highways of life had been paved and repaved. Thirty-two years ! The Schloss was a dead, dreary place, situated in a dead, dreary country—a mere lonely manor-house in the wilds, good enough for a month's stay ; but—thirty-two years ! Gott in Himmel ! And

she had been vivacious, worldly, sparkling with the glory of being and doing when he had last seen her !

A vision of the castle, as he had known it once or twice in the old, far-off days, rose before him. He saw again the leagues of flat marshland which surrounded it, the reedy river crawling by its walls, the grey alders shivering in the wind, and the wheeling of lonely plovers. He saw the sad towers, the cold, undecorated rooms, the windows looking out upon the lifeless waste of road. The road ! the livid unfruitful highway, upon which, for hours at a time, it had been said, dry burning eyes had been set, despairing for the mercy, the deliverance, which never came ! For thirty-two years ! God in heaven ! while the frost of age slowly settled on the beautiful eyes, the deep black hair, the breaking heart ! With a writhe, as of physical suffering, the old man turned from his window.

“ The life was dull at Schloss Ahlden ? ” he said.

“ Dull, sire.”

The correct, impassive attitude of the Captain maddened while it half cowed him. For a minute he held his breath—only to release it in a sudden question, unexpected, astounding :

“In your eyes, soldier, *she* was innocent?”

Von Gastein started under the shock—and recovered himself.

“During the twenty-five years, sire, I had the privilege of attending on her the Princess of Ahlden did not fail weekly to take the Sacrament, and on each occasion to avow her innocence before the altar.”

The King stared, then mumbled from loud to low.

“They will avow it,” he began, and broke off quickly. Some words reported to him, as having been uttered by her to one seeking to bring about a reconciliation before his enthronement, recurred to his mind: “If I am guilty, I am not worthy to be your Queen; if I am innocent, your King is not worthy to be my husband.”

A casuistry, feminine, non-committing—hedging, in the true sporting sense. He hardened. This fate had not after all seemed so merciless to one so guilty.

“She had liberty,” he said, as if appealing to his own conscience.

The Captain made a frigid reverence, acquiescing in the enormous lie.

“I say, she had liberty,” repeated the King—“permission to drive abroad.”

“For six miles, sire, back and forth,” answered the soldier, as if he accounted

himself addressed : “ for six miles west, to the old stone bridge on the Hayden road. So much and no more. At the bridge the escort turned her. On fine days she would drive herself—fast and faster, till the stones spun from the wheels. She would seem to madden for freedom, to outstrip her misery. Many times she would traverse the distance, the lady-in-waiting sitting, the troop spurring at her side ; and at the stone bridge it would be always the same. ‘ No further ? ’ ‘ No further, madam.’ ‘ Ah ! but death will release me ! ’ ”

He stopped, conscious of his own emotion. He had served the lovely sorrow so long that its tragedy had become part of himself.

“ I crave your Majesty’s forgiveness,” he muttered in a broken voice.

The King spoke up harshly :

“ She was limited to that road by necessity.”

“ During life, sire.”

The response came swift and involuntary. The soldier gasped, having made it.

“ You will stop the coach, and return to your duty,” said the King, blue in the face.

The former commotion was repeated ; the physician returned to his patient ; the cavalcade rolled on. His Majesty spoke

not a single word further, but sat staring from the window. It was deep dusk now without, and the lightning flickered with a ghastlier brilliancy. But still the King would give no order to have the lamps lighted. Instead, he lay with his livid face and protruding eyes addressed to the heavens and the horror of a thought incessant in his mind. *The road was open to her at last, and she was driving to cut him off from Osnabrück, the city in which he had been born.* She knew that a man could not die in the room where he was born ; and she was coming to forestall him with the dread summons to appear before his Maker, and answer for the thing he had done.

\*       \*       \*       \*

Much agitated, von Gastein remounted his horse, and spurred on to his place in the front. He did more ; he drove ahead of all, and took the lead on the solitary road making for Osnabrück. The lights of the city were already faintly starring the distance, when a sound coming from in front startled and then thrilled him. Swift wheels, and the hoofs of a tearing horse ! There was nothing uncommon in that ; and yet his heart went cold to hear it.

“ God have mercy on me ! ” he muttered :  
“ I am a fool ! ”

Nearer and nearer came the sound—it was close—it was upon him—and there rushed past the shadow of a cabriolet, with a wild woman on the seat flogging a wild black horse. The night of her hair streamed behind like a thin cloud dusted with diamonds, and there was a frenzy of triumph in her eyes, and on her lips a smile. And so she passed and was gone.

The Captain turned his horse’s head, and drove back upon the van.

“ Stop her ! ” he yelled. “ In God’s name stop her Highness before too late ! ”

They were jogging on leisurely, and thought him drunk or demented.

“ What Highness, Captain ? ” they said.  
“ There has been none passed this way.”

And on the word there came a loud cry from the rear, and for the third time the cavalcade halted. But von Gastein had sped by like the wind, and reached to where the royal carriage was stopped amid a little cloud of equerries ; and a dismayed, small figure stood upon the step by the open door.

“ His Majesty,” said the physician, gasping over his words, “ has had a stroke, and is dead ! ”

## George III

HIS Majesty King George III stood gazing from a corridor window of the royal palace. For all practical purposes he was alone, and the equerries and others attendant on the sovereign presence flitted almost as remote in actuality as they figured to his mental vision. They were shadows, no more—little blots of bile, too minute to intercept his view of things, though collectively, as denoting a bodily condition, a source of irritation.

The corridor was very dim, and full of gusty flaws. It was night, and the rain beat upon the windows. Without, it was all a chaos of cavernous glooms and myriad-drawn threads of water, weaving cloud to earth in one inextricable bondage. The darkness lay upon the King's heart like a tombstone. He cried to One in his agony to lift it, and bid the dead arise and come forth. He seemed to feel the cerements about his limbs, the headcloth binding and stupefying his brain. He talked incessantly to himself—prayers, expostulations, even

blasphemies—though he did not know it. A fearful thought was haunting him persistently—the thought that his reason was once more succumbing to the illness which had seized and overwhelmed it in the fifth year of his reign. He gasped and shivered in the stress of that apprehension. Providence had then thought fit to restore him, after a few terrible weeks of possession ; would not a renewed attack signify his proved unworthiness of Its favours, and his abandonment by It to the powers of darkness, this time for all eternity ?

He uttered a sudden cry, and, sinking into a chair, covered his face with his hands. The storm screamed above him, dashing its torrents on the glass. Only that fragile glaze stood between him and the besieging horrors. In a minute, in a moment, they must be through, and he would be claimed by them and damned for evermore.

He fought kingly to rally his nerves. A crown ! A monstrous destiny ! Yes, but its divine virtues engendered like qualities in those meet and resolute to assume them. He had striven, he would strive, to honour, according to his lights, the trust reposed in him. The will was his, if the lights were Heaven's. God might decree him a fool ; He should never call him a coward.

He rose to his feet once more and looked pallidly from the window. The sky was full of countless faces, and all gibing and distorted. There was not one among them but was known to him, or had been, though he could not recall when or how. Statesmen, warriors, servants, kith and kin—torn this way and that, they mingled, a multitudinous galaxy of spectres, with the darkness, and hemmed him in, a wall of mowing visages.

To stand thus and gaze upon the throng was to drink the very utterness of despair. Had none a gentle look for him ? Were all kings doomed so to realise their loneliness in the vast of time ? No mercy for him ; no hope, no love. How was it possible to love one so singly exalted, so isolated from all contact with the dear common human emotions ? Was it not appalling to be a king !

Sudden through the dark, through the twisted faces, a light twinkled. He started, he stared, he drew a deep ecstatic breath. He thought he heard a voice saying “ Arise, and come forth ! ” and he shook the bandage from his head and stood erect.

The light ! O God, not one, but infinite ! Like daisies opening upon a hill, they climbed that wall of darkness and spread

from town to sky. And in their blossoming the faces were gone.

And then in a moment he saw and understood. The wind had fallen, the sky was full of stars : they laughed and twinkled above the twinkling city. He was looking from a window of St. James's Palace across the Mall——

What had happened ? What had been affecting him a moment ago ? He breathed a prayer of fervid thanksgiving to Heaven for his quick emergence from that terrific shadow—called down by what ? He believed he penetrated the cause. It was only yesterday that the *pourparlers* for his marriage had been begun ; and was he so inhuman, or so superhuman, that, unlike all other men, he might experience no shock, no temporary unbalance of reason, in the immediate prospect of that tremendous change ? Nay, was not the prospect more distracting for him than for most ? seeing that no sentiment warmer than duty—duty to his people, duty to his succession—coloured its cold inevitability. He had heard of men, though bond-slaves to love, killing themselves in their inability to face that more lifelong bondage. What wonder that, in his case, a contract so based on policy should have terrified his reason in the thought ?

Well—he was well now, he was well. The loveless lot of kings ? That had been the chimera of a fancy momentarily diseased. No love for kings ? He laughed softly to himself, and, crossing his arms on the sill, leaned down his face into them.

And then instantly a dream came to him. The stars of the sky—first one, then another, then dripping streams of them—descended from their high places and, enshrinining themselves in crystal, became the lamps of the city. Faster and faster they poured, until he was treading a very milky-way of radiance. He could hardly see his path for the brightness as he walked—for, yes, he was walking ! Half dazzled, with the glowing smile of all things reflected on his face, he pushed his way through the golden mist. It was jewelled and spangled everywhere with glittering thoughts ; one might hardly know it for the London of one's daily experience. He remembered when he had first encountered this transformation—he, a serious, well-intentioned young prince, resolute, in his sober, unimaginative way, to justify his election before the face of Heaven—and how of a sudden some spirit exquisite beyond conception had usurped in him the place of duty.

No, not usurped, but sanctified. Self-

fulfilled through love, his debt to Heaven and his country would find him tenfold strengthened in its discharge.

Yet he walked like a thief, conscious through all the transcendent glow of a half-guilty rapture, glorying, though fearfully, in the thought of the treasure whose shrine he had desecrated to possess. He had never dreamed at one time of such a thing. It had come to him in a single moment how he, bred and educated under the severest maternal discipline, “cabin’d, cribbed, confined” within the narrowest limits of orthodoxy, was still not excluded from the destinies which Love creates. Why should he be ? A King, and denied the prerogative of his meanest subject ?

His way did not lie far through that garden of lamps ; but others were incessantly crossing and obstructing it. These shadows worried him : he seemed to know so many of them, yet the instant he thought to identify one it would fade and disappear. Along Pall Mall, across St. James’s Square, into Charles Street, and thence towards the glare and bustle of the Market—throughout the whole short route it was always the same. Thicker and thicker they came, hurrying across his path, until at length he could hardly force his way through the

press. Their insistence, their air of urgency, amazed and troubled him ; yet, possessed of a stubborn will, he would not be gainsaid. He knew the goal of his wild desires, and inch by inch he fought his way to attain it.

And then in a moment he was standing before the door, and he saw that it was closed and dark. The whole house was lightless, the window-panes were broken, there was no sign of life in all the empty place.

With a gasp he stepped back into the kennel. What did it mean ? Had he all this time been dreaming a dream, never realising its unreality, of a little Quaker bird whose song had once filled his soul with a passion for possession ? Had there ever been for him a "Nanny," a large-eyed, lovely child, who had captivated him with her sweet looks and words, and been lost somewhere in the gulfs of the dead past ? For whom, then, if not for him ? He could remember her pretty ways ; the very tones of her young voice when she first called him "Friend," and choked over the whispered daring. And what then—what thereafter ? Surely no dream ?

Of a sudden he became aware that the throng was all about him again—faces, a

wall of white, mowing faces such as he had seen in the clouds. There were hundreds there, each one somehow known to him, and all congregated without relation to the sequence of time. *Time?*—Merciful God ! It had ceased to exist for him ; and now in a moment he remembered. What could have driven him to seek Nanny on the eve of his own wedding ? He had forgotten that. He was to be married, he was to give the people a Queen and a succession, and Nanny had long been made to disappear from the path to that tremendous end. Months ago had it been, or years and years ? It was all one to him in the terror of his utter loneliness. These faces ! If they could arise and crowd upon him so confusedly, so irrelatively, why not Nanny's amongst them ? He wanted her, and they were crushing forward to withhold, to intercept him. She was there within all the time, and they had taken this cruel means to blind him to the truth. They were moving, they were sweeping upon him like a rushing wind ; with a cry he turned, and beat with frantic hands upon the closed door—

A quick step came down the corridor, and a formal, stiff-lipped gentleman paused beside the King.

"What are you doing, sir?" he said.  
"You must please to control yourself."

His Majesty turned, clutching his hand above his wild eyes. He was not standing and sobbing, a young emotional prince, before Nanny's house in the street off the old Market; he had not come from St. James's Palace at all. He was standing in the dark corridor at Windsor Castle, beating with feeble fingers on the storm-thrashed casement—an old, old mad and weary man, age-long forgetting and forgotten by all the world.

"You must not thump the window like that, sir," said Willis, the cold-cyed doctor in attendance, "or you will cut your hands. What is it you need?"

The tears dropped from the old King's eyes. He shook his head, muttering and mumbling.

"I was thinking," he said, "I was thinking. I need very little—only a new suit of clothes. But they must be black—black, in memory of George the Third."

## The Hero of Waterloo

COLONEL MANTON put up his rod and demanded to be set ashore. It had been his first experience of coarse fishing on the river, and it had not proved to his taste. It was not that the perch had been distant or the chub unapproachable. On the contrary, the place having been ground-baited overnight, the sport had been excellent. It was the worms and one other thing which decided him. He had been present at Talavera, at Ciudad Rodrigo, at Badajos, at Vittoria, at Quatre Bras, at Waterloo ; he had seen as much carnage as most men, but this bloodless impaling of lob-worms on hooks, and then casting them, so transfixed, to lie writhing on the river bottom for an indefinite period at the end of a ledger-line, offended his sense of fitness. It was not, it seemed to him, playing the game. The worms had no chance, and they could not bite back. He hated to sit there and think of what was going on under the quiet water, and the reflection gained nothing in relish from the

fact that, by refusing to soil his own hands with the viscous contortions of the creatures, he must appear, in delegating that operation to the boatman, to torture by deputy, like the most cowardly of Eastern despots. And so when, as presently happened, this same stolid deputy, in "disgorging" an obstinate hook from a barbel's throat, tore away— But it is enough to say that the Colonel put down his rod and demanded there and then to be set ashore.

There was no gainsaying him, of course. It was sufficient that he was the guest of a distinguished General living at Datchet; but in addition to this the Colonel's personal actions invited no criticism. He fished—as he walked, as he rode, as he appeared on all secular occasions—in a dark blue wasp-waisted frock-coat with frogs, in tight nankeen trousers strapped under neat insteps, in a stiff collar and full black stock, in a tall hat with a brim so crescented that its front peak looked like the "nasal" of a Norman helmet. And for the rest he carried himself and his white moustache with the conscious authority of a cock of a hundred fights.

The boatman put him ashore on the river-bank some half-mile below Datchet, towards which village he immediately addressed his

steps. The path was lonely and unfrequented, and it gave the Colonel some surprise to observe, as he turned a clump of bushes, a fashionable old beau toddling along it in front of him. In a few moments the latter paused, nonplussed, at a stile, and the Colonel came up with him.

The pedestrian was a man of uncouth bulk but distinguished mien. He wore a black frock-coat of a somewhat military cut, with a rich fur collar. Curly auburn locks, obviously artificial, showed beneath the brim of his glossy hat, and accented somewhat ghastfully the puffy pallor of a face whose texture betrayed its age. His eyes had a glutinous, half-blind appearance; his loose lower lip perpetually trembled. He peered at the new-comer, panting a good deal, as if the sudden apparition had shaken his nerves.

“If I may venture, sir,” said Colonel Manton, and proffered his arm. The other accepted it to mount the stile. It was an ungraceful business, and, once over, he stood, with his hands to his sides, vibrating heavily, like a worn-out engine, to his own respirations. Presently he was sufficiently recovered to speak.

“A damned obstruction—a damned obstruction! Cannot I leave my carriage

a moment to walk round by the water but this annoyance must appear in my path ? ”

“ A villainous stile,” said the Colonel.  
“ We will indict it for a trespass.”

He was a reasonable man, and he felt the absurdity of the complaint. But, to his surprise, his sarcasm missed fire.

“ Do so, do so,” said the old gentleman, and took his arm again, as it might have been his own walking-stick. They went on together, and in a little the stranger had opened a conversation with all the effrontery in the world.

“ My boy, what’s your rank ? ” said he.  
“ I perceive you are a soldier.”

The officer stared, and drew himself up.

“ Colonel Manton, sir, at your service,” he answered distantly.

He was surprised ; but the man was old, near seventy by his appearance, and very possibly from his cut a retired veteran like himself. Familiarity from a general, say, would be pardonable, and even kindly. Besides, he did not dislike the implied suggestion of juniority.

“ Hey ! ” said the stranger—“ retired ? ”

“ Yes, sir, retired.”

“ Brevet rank ? ”

“ Brevet be damned ! ” said Colonel

Manton hotly. "I owe my promotion, sir, if you wish to know, to Waterloo."

The stranger glanced at him with a curiously sly look, and pinched the arm on which his own fingers rested.

"What!" he said, "were you there?"

"I had the honour, sir," said the Colonel grandiloquently, "of playing my little part in that Homeric contest."

"Whose division, hey?"

"Picton's—Pack's brigade. You are a little—you will excuse my saying it—particular."

"Certainly I will, my boy. Wounded—hey?"

A distinct flush suffused the Colonel's cheek.

"Wounded—yes," he replied shortly.

The old fellow nudged him confidentially.

"Tell me," he said—"how?"

"Look here—you must forgive me, you know," exploded the Colonel; "but I must point out that we are strangers. Still—as a fellow-campaigner—if that is the case—may I ask, sir, if *you* were at Waterloo?"

The other laughed enjoyingly.

"*Was I?*" he said. "To be sure I was. You had all good reason for knowing it."

Colonel Manton's eyes opened. Here was a momentous implication. Evidently he had

to do with some great general of division, though the boast sounded a little extravagant and unmilitary. He ran over in his mind a dozen possible names, but without success. And then the thought occurred to him : "Good reason for knowing it ? What the devil ! Is it possible he was on the other side ? "

The idea seemed too preposterous for belief ; the stranger was so obviously British. Who, in wonder's name, could he be, then ? Hill, Macdonnell, Saltoun, Uxbridge, Vandeleur, Somersett, Hackett—all divisional or brigadier-generals ? He could not identify him, of his knowledge, with any one of these. The Iron Duke himself ? He had never been brought into very close personal contact with the great man, but naturally he was familiar with his features. Could it be possible that time had so fused and blunted those that their characteristic contour had degenerated into this scarce distinguishable pulp ? Prosperity, he knew, could play strange tricks with countehances, yet a *volte-face* so revolutionary seemed incredible. And yet who else but the Duke had been on that day as indispensable as implied ? But it was conceivable that some might have so regarded themselves—that certain heads

might have been turned by their share in the success of so stupendous a victory.

Colonel Manton had been living abroad on his half-pay for some years, and, until the occasion of this visit during the summer of 1830, had dwelt for long a stranger to his native land. He could but suppose that he had in a measure lost the clue, through subsequent developments, to old events. It remained clear only that he was in the presence of one who had, or believed himself to have, contributed signally to the success of the epoch-making battle. And that must be enough for him. He spoke thenceforth as a subordinate to his commanding officer.

“I beg your indulgence, sir,” he said. “I have been absent from my country for a considerable time, and features once familiar elude me. You asked about my wound. It is a ridiculous matter, and I recall it without enthusiasm. The fact is that, when d’Erlon’s guns were pounding us before the advance, a ball smashed the head of a sergeant standing near me, and one of the fellow’s cursed double-teeth was driven into my neck. It was not enough to cripple my fighting power, but I would have given a dozen of my own to boast a more honourable scar.”

The stranger chuckled.

"Sears are not the only guarantee of valour," he said.

The Colonel ventured: "You brought away some of your own, sir?"

"No," said the old fellow. "No; Wellington and I got off scot-free."

The Colonel dared again: "Were you, may I ask, on his personal staff?"

"Well, yes," said the stranger, chuckling still more, "I suppose you might call it that."

Suppose? Colonel Manton gaped. It was positively a matter of history that not one of that staff had escaped death or mutilation. The other may have noticed his perplexity, for he turned on him with an air of sudden annoyance.

"You haven't the assurance to question my word, I hope, sir?" he demanded.

"Certainly not," answered the Colonel.

"I could give you convincing proof," said the stranger. "Did the Commander-in-Chief—now did he or did he not—visit General Blücher at Wavre the night before the battle to make sure of his co-operation?"

"It is a disputed point, sir," said the Colonel. "I believe that even his Grace has been known to contradict himself in the matter, saying at one time that he

would never have fought without Blücher's explicit promise to back him up, at another flatly contradicting the report that he saw the Prussian general on the night before the battle."

"And he did not, my boy," sniggered the old fellow triumphantly, "for his interview with him was after midnight, and therefore on the day of the battle. I ought to know, *for I sent him off there myself.*"

He cackled into such a spasm of laughter that the convulsion caught his wind.

"O, my chest!" he wheezed and gasped, "my miserable chest! I'm the most wretched creature on earth. But it's nothing, nothing—the youngest fellows are subject to it." He coughed and wiped his eyes with a heavily scented handkerchief. "Yes," he said presently, "yes, Wellington was a sound workaday general, a fine soldier, an inspired commissary, but, of genius—h'm! We need only suggest, Manty my boy, that he was well advised. The man at his elbow, hey? You need not mention it, you know, but the real hero of Waterloo—hey, d'ye see? Keep it to yourself; there were reasons against its being divulged—you understand? What, my boy!"

The Colonel stared before him as if

hypnotised; he stumbled in his walk. Was it possible to mistake the implication—that the laurels ought by rights to have adorned the brow of this stranger beside him? He felt like one whose faith had suddenly exploded of its own intensity, leaving his breast a blackened shell. Could there actually have been another, of whom he had never heard, at the Duke's right hand on that tremendous day, the presiding but unconfessed genius of it? He had heard speak of the Corsican's little red familiar. Was his great rival, were possibly all commanding intellects, so supernaturally provided?

He was really a simple man, with a mind ruled to certain prescriptive lines of conduct. He glanced askance at his companion, who was smiling and murmuring to himself. Who in Heaven's name could he be? and why had he selected *him* for his astounding confidences? For all his own fearless rectitude, an uncanny feeling began to possess him. He was glad, in turning a corner, to see the end of the path, and the head of a waiting coachman showing above the hedge. And the next moment they had emerged on to the village green.

A barouche stood there, with a bare-headed gentleman standing at its door.

The liveries of the servants were scarlet, and a mounted man in a scarlet embroidered coat waited a little apart. The gentleman came forward.

“Will your Majesty be pleased to ascend?” he asked.

The King dropped the Colonel’s arm, and appeared on the instant to forget all about him.

“Yes, Watty; yes, certainly, my boy,” he said. “Is that the fiery chariot?”

## Beau Brummell

GEORGE BRYAN BRUMMELL, Esq., his Britannic Majesty's Consul in the Norman city of Caen, was about to entertain. He had given instructions to his attendant that great company was expected, together with a list of the distinguished names to be announced ; and by eight o'clock his room in the Hôtel d'Angleterre was prepared, the tables for whist were set out and the *bougies* lighted. Staring, half hypnotised, into the radiance of one of these placed on the mantelpiece, the Beau's eyes blinked, and the Beau himself faced about with a puzzled look and a suspicious sniff.

“ What is that smell, Loustalot ? ”

He spoke to the attendant, who in his little black *jaquette* and blue apron looked very much like what, in fact, he was—a waiter at the hotel. The expression on this man's face scintillated between gravity and mockery ; the tone of his voice hovered between audacity and deference.

"It will doubtless be the soot in the chimney, Monsieur," he said coolly.

"H'm ! You are sure it is not a candle in need of snuffing ?"

"The best wax, Monsieur ? Monsieur speaks as if he burnt filthy tallow. Monsieur's nostrils are more sensitive than discriminating. *A, là !* What it is to be bred to this imperishable refinement !"

He was busy while he spoke in snuffing the wick, and in privately depositing the reeking instrument on the hob.

"I go to announce the company, Monsieur," he said. "In the meantime, if I were Monsieur, I would not spit too much on the carpet."

"An insolent rascal !" muttered the Beau to himself as the man disappeared. "I shall have to discharge him."

He had, however, so completely forgotten his resolve the next minute, that when Loustalot, returning, thrust his head round the door, he could not for the moment recall who he was.

"O ! by the by, Monsieur," said the man, "Monsieur Magdelaine, the confectioner, desires to know if you will settle with him your little account for Maraschino and Biscuits de Rheims."

The Beau smiled, waving his hand.

“ To be sure—when it is full moon. Tell him so, my friend.”

“ Will not Monsieur tell him himself? His smile is such a surety, and I cannot reproduce it.”

Brummell burst into a scream of rage.

“ You dare to mock me! Leave the room, you scoundrel!”

The man grinned and disappeared. The spurt of fury ran to instant waste. Brummell set to pacing the room, cycling successively the walls, the shining mantelpiece, his own shoes—all with an expression of the most complacent satisfaction. The last, indeed, as he saw them, evoked a positive sigh of transport.

“ That Vernis de Guiton!” he murmured: “ positively a Corinthian polish! But it’s devilish expensive—devilish.”

He strutted again, sticking out his chest and quavering a little stanza of his own, which someone at some time had set to music:

*“ Oh ye! who so lately were blithesome and gay,  
At the Butterfly’s banquet carousing away;  
Your feasts and your revels of pleasure are fled,  
For the soul of the banquet, the Butterfly’s dead!”*

He paused, cocking his head on one side, inquisitive.

“ Now, where did I hear that ? ” he said. “ Aye, aye—the poor butterfly, and dead, with the honey in his throat ! Well, 'tis best—to fold one's plumes upon the feast, and, sunk in the happy flush of revelry, to die and leave a golden record. So may Fortune favour me. But there's time yet—poor butterfly, poor butterfly ! Gad ! he makes me weep.”

But it was only the oil dropping from his wig and running down his face. He attended personally to its lubrication in these days, and far too liberally. In a moment he looked up, the transcendent light returned to his eyes. He hummed a livelier air. Self-gratification beamed from him. It was something, after all, in this world, he reflected, to have that indomitable spirit which could rebound, like an india-rubber ball, from the blows of Fortune, the rebuffs of false friends, and exhibit always the same polished, undinted surface. He had not allowed hard Fate to subdue his spirit, to impair his wit, to hammer him into forgetfulness of his duty to his own original ineffable self, and he prayed only that the doom of the butterfly might overtake him long before age came to blunt his exquisite perceptions of fitness, his fastidious taste, his delicate palate !

What if one were to come to realise, in moments of lucidity, one's debased reputation, out-of-dateness, personal uncleanness, perhaps?—O horrible, horrible! He shuddered; he touched the immaculate frill at his throat, smoothed the satin on his thighs with a trembling hand. An ugly dream! Thank God he could congratulate himself, had always been able to congratulate himself, on an intellectual strength capable of carrying the extremest extravagance of foppery. He had shaped himself deliberately to a fame he would never have attained on the force of his wit alone. And yet he had always remained a gentleman, and a gentleman could never come to forget himself. Intellect and character both told against any such possible demoralisation.

Loustalet threw open the door wide, and announced in a loud voice, "Her Grace the Duchess of Devonshire!"

With a bright smile and extended hands the Consul tripped forward.

"Ah! my dear Duchess," he said, "you are welcome a thousand times. A chair, Loustalet." (He seated himself close beside the lovely visitor.) "I was dreaming of old age," he said, "and imperishable youth comes to rebuke me. Your Grace, more

loving-kind than Aurora, once bestowed immortality on me, but with a better percipience than the goddess when she doomed her poor Tithonus to perpetual dotage. This is no dry grasshopper's note, but the same liquid cackle that greeted our sallies at Chatsworth. Do you remember the French Marquis, whose hair-powder we dusted with sugar, and how at the breakfast-table, the heat and *sueur* having melted it, the flies settled until the poor man's head was like a plum pudding? *Hélas!* the jocund spirit survives; only the environment dejects. But now that your Grace——”

“ Milord Byron! ” announced Loustalot at the door. The Beau rose, and advanced with infinite courtesy. Always the pink of breeding, he had yet an especial part to play before this pale, distinguished guest, whose compliment on the “ exquisite propriety ” of his dress and conduct had once reached his ears, never to be forgotten.

“ I greet your lordship,” he said, “ with a particular confidence, since for the nonce a goddess does the honours of my poor abode. Ah! that Sèvres biscuit figure—a girl bathing, after Falconet. It will appeal to you—a new acquisition. You know my fancy for canes and snuff-boxes and china—

trivial pursuits, but more profitable than fox-hunting."

"His Grace the Duke of Bedford!" bellowed Loustalot.

Brummell, having deposited the poet in a third seat, hurried to the door.

"Bedford, my dear fellow," he whispered, horrified, "do you realise that the collar of your coat is turned up at the back? It recalls to me the most supreme moment in my life. I was due at Lady Dungannon's reception, and circumstances had forced me—hush! the admission is inexpressibly painful—to, to take a hackney coach. However, I believed that I had successfully evaded detection, and had mounted the stairs into full view of the drawing-room, when a servant whispered in my ear, 'Sir—do you know that you have got a straw in your shoe?' Conceive, if you can, my horror. I shall never forget that moment."

The memory, indeed, appeared so to weigh upon him, that for a little he forgot his company, and sat apart from it in dreary abstraction. The name of Mr. Chig Chester being called withdrew him from it, and he rose gaily.

"Our redoubtable gamester and sportsman," he said, returning with the visitor.

"We have material here for a table, Duchess. But remember, in Caen we play only for love and crackers."

He dissolved into a fit of chuckling laughter, until the Lady Jersey was announced. And then came others—my Lord Petersham, the Duke of Rutland, Scrope Davies, Mrs. O'Neill, the Duchess of Gordon, and half a dozen more. The little room was soon too full for its capacity ; but the spirits of the courtly host surmounted all difficulties and made a positive grace of inconvenience. He tripped, he chatted, he was perpetually talking and on the move, exchanging badinage with one, recalling incidents of past happy days with another, pointing out the treasures of his modest sanctum to a third—a picture by Morland, a clock by Verdier, a Louis XV *bonheur du jour*. Exile, he wished to show, had not dulled his appreciation of the beautiful, or shaken his position as a wit and supreme arbiter of the elegancies. Now as always it was a privilege to claim his acquaintance-ship, to be seen on his arm ; now as always his smile or his frown could make or break.

In the midst, a candle guttered heavily on the mantelpiece, and a little girl, the landlord's petted one, ran into the room.

“ Monsieur Brummell,” she cried, “ Monsieur Brummell, you have not yet given me the sou you promised for *nanan*.”

He caught her by the arm.

“ Hush ! ” he said. “ Do you not see the company ? ”

She stared round with wide, wondering eyes.

“ What company, Monsieur ? I see only a row of chairs ! ”

“ Look again, Babette.”

“ I am looking hard, Monsieur.”

The Beau, releasing his grip, sank into a seat. Before him on the wall loomed a cheap mirror. He saw the reflection in it of a broken, toothless old man, semi-palsied, dirty, degraded. His scratch-wig, poked awry, was foul with rancid grease ; his shoes were lustreless and in holes. He raised dim, wandering eyes, and marked the squalid, unfurnished walls, the one whist-table with a broken leg, the three common shells on the mantelpiece flanked by a couple of reechy tallow candles in brass sconces. And—yes, the row of empty chairs. Staring like one awakened, he uttered a dreary little laugh, and beckoned to the child.

“ Come, Babette,” he said, “ and we will hunt for the sou. Let us hope it has not

slipped through the hole in my pocket. I had been playing, child—playing with the shadows of some little dolls, long, long dead everyone of them, and my company, after all, turns out to be one lonely old man, with a tattered coat and a single pair of trousers, which Madame Fichet has to patch while their owner lies abed.”

## Paganini

IT was in Florence that Baronte at last ran to earth that terrific secret which for ten long months had eluded and maddened him. Here, in the summer of 1819, was present once again that fiend incarnate of melody, that monster Paganini—and more astounding, more inexplicable than ever. He had taken the city captive as utterly as any Marmaldo ; he drew its people, extravagantly laughing and sobbing, in the wake of his devil's music. And Florence was Baronte's native town, and it was here, he had felt, that his quest must end, though even at the gates of Death. And, behold ! Fate, even in the shadow of his reason's overthrow, had vouchsafed him at length and at least an approximate solution of the mystery.

What mystery, then, and what secret ? Why those that touched upon the source of the Maestro's superhuman powers—nothing more nor less. But, for whatever was their ethical value, they had haunted Baronte's soul for full ten months—ever

since that night, in fact, when he had first heard Paganini play in the Scala Theatre at Milan. And from that night onwards he had followed his evil genius, as he regarded the man, from town to town, feeding yet hungering, drinking yet thirsting, loathing and lusting at once.

Baronte was himself, though an amateur, a rare violinist. He knew as well as most the extreme capacities of the instrument, and the sympathies possible to be created between its sensitive mechanism and the interpretative soul of its player. But here was something which as much surpassed the conceivable limits of human execution as it surpassed mortal understanding in its expression of superhuman passions and emotions. It was not instrumentation to which one listened, but temptation—melodious frenzy, an ecstatic lure to things forbid, rendered not by, but through a human medium. The great Master, it was very certain, was in league with the devil to betray mankind through the most voluptuous of its senses, and in no other way could the miracle be explained. Baronte felt it in every nerve of his responsible being, and sought nothing but a confirmation of his suspicions to dare a martyr's fate. Young, emotional, fanatic, with

haggard face and brilliant eyes, he retained all of that religious fervour which had once kept him hesitating on the threshold of the Church, and which still yielded to nothing but his passion for music.

And at last he stood on the brink, as he believed, of the great discovery. The dread secret lay to be exhumed, he had convinced himself, from the recesses of the little black morocco handbag which the dark Master perpetually carried about with him.

It might contain some demoniac philtre ; it might conceal some vessel, like the Fisherman's flask, loaded with the concentrated essence of all wickedness. It was certain that the bag never left its possessor's custody day or night ; that he bore it with him on his rare excursions abroad ; that he hugged it to his pillow throughout the hours of darkness. Baronte knew all this from his confidant and sympathiser young Varano, who had hired, at his instance, a room adjoining the Maestro's, in the hotel occupied by the latter, and who had been able to keep a pretty incessant watch, through an unsuspected crack in the party panelling, on his tremendous neighbour. It was this friend who had described to him the sympathy apparent between Paganini

and his hidden fetish, who had whispered to him awfully of day-long prostrations on a couch, broken only by spasmodic writhings, by fiendish ejaculations and brief explosions of laughter, or by wild apostrophisings of the *thing*, held up in worshipping hands before two gloating eyes. It contained, without doubt, the key to the mystery—only how to find an opportunity to examine it? That was as yet as stultifying a problem as itself. And in the meantime the Maestro's engagement was drawing to a close.

One night before the end Baronte sat in the theatre. It was packed from floor to ceiling, and his restless vision hunted, as always, among the massed audience for some confirmation of a shadowy legend. It related, this legend, of a beautiful weeping girl, and of a man, her companion, bleak, sardonic, with whom the player would be seen to exchange a smile of ghastly import, and of the sudden inexplicable disappearance of the two. He believed the story—and he did not believe it; as he believed and disbelieved that other tale of the shape dimly adumbrated behind the Master's figure and directing its bowing. The whispers of libertinism and nameless cruelties which pursued the great performer's footsteps affected him no more,

either way, than these others. It was sufficient, in his conception of evil, to credit the fiend with a capacity for achieving without betraying himself, of directing the touch on the instrument, of *being* the instrument itself, the imagined Guancrìus, if he chose.

And then instant silence, a shock, a thrill, and Paganini stood before the expectant house.

Music! He appeared the antithesis of every grace, of every emotion associated with its production—an impossible grotesque, like a clown got up as a fiddle and proposing to play upon himself. There he stood in the glare of the footlights, as ungainly an anomaly as the mind could conceive. He was tall, he was supernaturally gaunt and angular; his long kit-shaped face, pallid as Death's own, seemed pierced with two blackened sockets for eyes; his hair, lank and raven, straggled upon his shoulders. He was dressed in a tight-buttoned black swallow-tail and black trousers, loose for the period and awkwardly short at the ankles. As the storm of greeting subsided and the orchestra crashed out its symphony, he settled himself upon his right hip, like a badly articulated skeleton, and, raising bow and fiddle, dived his long

chin into the latter, and, with a grinning snarl upon his face, poised the former, like a veritable fiend of extravaganza.

Baronte knew it all so well, and waited impassive for the sequel, his eyes canvassing the breathless house rather than the performer. And then suddenly the bow descended, with a blow like a melodious sledge-hammer, and the wild, lovely orgy had begun.

Paganini surely had never played before as he played that night. It was all stupendous, unsurpassable, horrible. The very violin seemed to bend and spring beneath his hands like the body of a young witch, alluring, eluding, brutifying. At the finish it was with a feeling of utter emotional collapse that Baronte crept from the house and sought his lodgings. This thing must end, he told himself—somehow this thing must end, and to-morrow.

In the late morning he rose—to ominous skies and a sensation of stifling heat. A haggard ghost of himself, he sought the Master's hotel. He knew the obscene creature's customs—to fast at times, to gorge at times, to lie brooding all day, hating company as he hated priests and doctors; sometimes to break abroad in a wild convulsion of energy, and go tearing

none knew whither. And to-day Fortune, whether for good or evil, favoured Baronte. As he approached the hotel, with the intent to take counsel of his friend Varano, he saw the demoniac figure itself issue from the portal, and hurry with distracted visage northwards. He hesitated a moment—then started in pursuit.

Near the bridge Alle Grazic stood three men—an itinerant butcher, a bird-vender, and one, a pert, showy vagabond, with a pallid face, and the dirty little finger-nail of his left hand grown long as a charm against the evil eye. The butcher, in blue jacket and leatheren cap, carried in one hand a single joint of meat upon a hook, and in the other a shrill small horn on which to blow its praises ; the bird-seller, a stalwart, bronzed young fellow, with gold rings in his ears and his shirted torso half bared to the heat, bore over his shoulders a yoke of cord, from each of whose ends hung a netted sieve alive with twittering songsters ; the loafer carried nothing but himself, and that cheaply. As the figure of the Maestro, hopping like a great crow, approached and passed, the bird-seller stared, the butcher gaped, and the loafer, crossing himself with a muttered prayer, sprang back into the roadway—and collided with

Baronte, who pushed him aside and sped on.

“The devil!” gasped the loafer; and the bird-seller laughed deridingly.

“In escaping the smoke you have jumped into the fire, gossip,” said he. “The second was the true devil.”

He looked it, indeed, if his burning eyes were any criterion, as he hurried in the wake of the receding figure. It led him across the south-eastern angle of the city to the gate of the Pinti, through which it passed like a striding shadow, and thence, turning northwards, took the winding ascent to Fiesole. Baronte followed, with what purpose he himself did not know.

It was a terrible day, lowering, oppressive, fateful with tempest. And all in a moment the heavens were delivered. They burst in a crash of rain and fire that made the reason stagger. Through the smoke of flung water Baronte could still see the figure mounting before him, gesticulating, whirling its long arms, from time to time uttering peals of loud laughter that mingled unearthly with the tumult of the storm. And then, all in a moment, it was gone.

A ruined villa stood up stark and streaming against the sky. Baronte, panting to the

shelter of its broken walls, was suddenly aware, in a brief lull of the storm, of a voice clamant hard by. It wailed, it laughed, it sobbed ; it uttered, it seemed, inarticulate blasphemies ; it sought to out-roar the thunder, to out-screch the wind. With an answering cry the young man ran round—and staggered to a stop before the vision which his eyes encountered. For there, prone among the tumbled masonry and the long weeds and grass, lay the figure of the black Master himself.

It was flung upon its back, writhing as if in torment. It screamed ; it hugged and crumpled itself into grotesque contortions ; it gnashed grinning teeth ; its eyeballs glinted like porcelain in the lightning.

“*Ah, pôvero me !*” screamed Paganini. “Why did I forget the bag ! *Eccomi perduto !* I am lost—I am lost !”

With a gasp Baronte stepped back, undiscovered of the other. The next moment he was racing down the hill towards Florence.

At the door of the hotel, wild and drenched, he ran upon young Varano, and, clutching him by the shoulders, glared into his eyes.

“Quick !” he panted. “He is up there on the hill—I have seen him—and without

his fetish. Quick ! Our opportunity has arrived."

Varano nodded pallidly.

" I know," he whispered. " I was coming to look for you."

Together they stole up to the Maestro's chamber ; opened the unlatched door like thieves ; entered, and discovered the forgotten bag lying upon a chair. Dreading he knew not what terrific revelation, Baronte pressed the snap and disclosed——

Down in the vestibule a moment later they ran upon the landlord.

" *Benedetto, mi' amico,*" said Varano smoothly, " can you tell us what is ' Leroy ' ? "

" Of a verity, Signore," answered the man. " ' Leroy ' is a quack remedy, a sedative, and very good for relieving pain. You should ask the great Maestro Paganini, whom it is my distinction to lodge, and who applies it to a bowel complaint from which he has long suffered terribly. He is never without a bottle or two of it in his little black bag."

## Napoleon

IT was the 4th of July, 1809, and a thunderous, close evening. In Lobau, the largest of the five islands on the Danube, where were the imperial headquarters, the huge machinery of war, human and insentient, was getting up steam, so to speak, for the morrow's milling, and eliciting, as its flywheel slowly revolved, an automatic response in all its myriad parts from Pressburg to Vienna. The occasion, it might be said, was an emergency occasion. If the Emperor, himself commanding, had not been thrashed by the Austrians, under the Archduke Charles, a couple of months earlier at Aspern, his retreat upon the islands had looked so much like a defeat, that for the moment his supremacy, moral and material, hung in the balance. For the first time the Grand Army had suffered a shock to its *amour-propre* and its hitherto invincible faith in its leader. A little might turn the scale, and send all its disintegrated legions scuttling back to Strasburg.

That the impenetrable "Antichrist" himself was fully aware of the nature of the hazard there is no reason to doubt, or that he was concentrating all the deepest faculties of his genius on the delivery of a blow which should be immense and final. He was much alone in his tent, and his orders were laconic and momentous. The ordinary mind cannot picture such a situation, and dismiss its surrounding distractions—one might say its hauntings. There were the arsenals, the forges, the rope-walks, the sheds for boat-mending, the canteens and parks of artillery all over the five islands ; there were the boats themselves in the river, scores of them, and the massive chains which bound them into bridges ; there were the ammunition wagons and their loaded boxes, the forests of piled arms, the tossed oceans of tents, the miles of tethered horses, the ring-fences of palisades ; and there were the troops for last, enough to people a great city, and each man of them as cheerily busy as if he were one of an exodus of Israelites picketing on his way to the promised land. Seven weeks before this same island of Lobau had been littered with the legs and arms of those wounded at Aspern—limbs hastily severed and flung helter-skelter among the grass of its

meadows. Its soil was soaked with blood ; thousands of mangled men and horses had sunk screaming in the waters which thundered by its shores ; a hail of iron had smashed into it and its even more luckless neighbours ; fire from burning mills had roared down upon its bridges, melting men and metal into one horrible annealing ; it had heaved and vomited with the filth of war. And had all that hideous picture a place in the background of the master-mind, or had its present aspect, of busy preparation for another scene as sickening, or worse ? One sorrow may have haunted him, one bloody ghost out of all the multitudes—the figure of his old comrade Marshal Lannes, as he had seen him borne hither on a litter of branches and muskets on the fatal day—one shattered horror more to feed the carnage. He had been moved a moment, had wept, and kissed the dying man. An unconscious thought of him may have lingered still like a melancholy shadow in his soul. But, for the rest, one may be sure that he looked over and beyond all these things, as a great architect sees through the maze of scaffolding the glory of the fabric his soul has raised. This man, it is to be supposed, ever regarded a battle-field but as a map, so clear to his mind that,

as the opposing troops manœuvred on it, he could check or reinforce them, show them the way to defeat or victory with his eyes shut. He was a calculating "freak," and as such superhuman—or superdiabolic.

As the dark gathered, lit only by the flickering lightnings, an immense hush fell over the islands. Every lamp and fire was extinguished ; the multitudinous tramp of moving hosts mingled with the boom of the river, and became part with it ; the song of the bugles, soft and short, mounted on the wind, and fled with its shrilling through the branches of the trees. One might never have guessed the universal movement that was taking itself cover, as it were, under these silences, as if the islands themselves had been unmoored, and were drifting soundlessly, with their freight of death, towards the shores.

In the midst, a little cry, sharp and sudden, rang out in the neighbourhood of the Emperor's tent—it might have been a trodden bird's ; it passed, and was not repeated. A young officer, de Sainte Croix, of the personal staff, hurried towards the spot. It was he, vigorous and enthusiastic, who had often gained the Emperor's approval by climbing tall trees on the island to watch the Austrian preparations on the distant plain.

He found a sentry standing by a clump of bushes, and another, one of the Old Guard, lying prone at his feet.

“ Malediction ! ” he whispered. “ Who had the daring ? ”

The man saluted.

“ It is Corporal Lebrun, Monsieur. He gave one cry—thus ; and I saw him fall. He was hit over the heart at Essling, and only his cartouchier saved him ; but he has complained since of an oppression. I think the closeness, the thunder——”

The officer interrupted him :

“ That will do. You had no right to leave your post. Return to it.”

The soldier saluted again, wheeled, and retreated. De Sainte Croix bent over the fallen man.

“ How is it, Lebrun ? ”

The corporal lay with a ghastly face, his breath labouring, his chest lifting in spasms. He was not a young man, yet prematurely aged, toughened, grizzled, tanned like old leather in the service of his god. There was a wild, lost look in his eyes which betokened the coming end. He struggled to speak.

“ Lift me up, monsieur, in God’s name ! ”

De Sainte Croix took the livid head on his

knee. The posture somewhat eased the fighting heart.

“Courage, comrade! This fit will pass with the oppression. Why, I myself feel it—I. When the storm breaks——”

The blue lips caught at the word.

“When the storm breaks! What will he have answered?”

“He? Who?” said the young officer.

The dying corporal, twisting in his arms, made an awful gesture towards the Emperor’s tent.

“As always,” said de Sainte Croix, “with the cry to victory.”

The other clutched his hand with a grip like madness.

“I believe it, monsieur. He will have renewed the compact.”

“What compact, my poor friend?”

“With the red man.”

De Sainte Croix could hardly catch the answer.

He laughed—men must laugh, though they died for it—and spoke a soothing word. He believed the poor fellow delirious.

“I have laughed too, I have scorned, I have feigned to disbelieve,” said Lebrun, thickly and passionately. “I laugh no longer. Marengo, Hohenlinden, Jena, Austerlitz—what mortal brain unassisted

could have so added victory to victory, could so, and for so long a time, have held the world's destinies in the hollow of one hand ? I am a soldier, monsieur, a simple, uneducated man, and yet I know things and I have seen things that would make the wise falter in their wisdom."

"This red man, amongst others," said the young officer conciliatingly.

A quiver of lightning at the moment glazed the dying face. Great drops stood on it ; the fallen cheeks were filling with shadow ; the eyeballs shone like porcelain. In spite of himself, a shiver ran down de Sainte Croix's spine. There was certainly something uncanny in the night, even to war-toughened nerves. Lebrun's voice had sunk to a whisper as he answered :

"Didst thou never hear of the General's proclamation in Egypt to the Ulemas and Shereefs ? He stood then on shifting sand —the English sea-captain had just beaten us. A false step, and he were engulfed for ever. And, to gain the people, he told them that their God had sent him to destroy the enemies of Islam and to trample on the cross."

"Policy, Lebrun," said de Sainte Croix, lifting his hand to wipe his own wet forehead. "He never meant it."

“ Then why, monsieur, did this blasphemy follow immediately on the visit of the red man ? There had been no hint of it before—and afterwards he swore to them that their false bible was the true word.”

De Sainte Croix snapped somewhat fretfully :

“ This red man ? Who the devil is he ? ”

A shudder quite convulsed the corporal.

“ Thou hast spoken it, monsieur.”

“ A figment of your excited fancy, soldier.”

“ With these eyes I saw him, monsieur. It was ten years ago. I was on guard in a corridor of the Palace at Cairo, *and there came out of the General’s cabinet one who had never gone in*. Little he was, like a child of a hundred years, and he had on a blood-red *bernous*, and his face was black as a Nubian’s. Only at the lips it pulsed with fire, and fire, dim and wavering, travelled under his cheeks. One moment thus he stood—I could have touched him—and, behold ! he was a little draped black figure of bronze that stood on a pedestal by a red curtain. It had always been there—I rubbed my eyes——”

“ *Voilà la chose !* ”

“ Monsieur, I dared. I listened at the General’s door, and I heard him laugh

softly to himself—he who never laughs—and he said: ‘Greet thee, Zamiel! Ten years I have given thee to make me a god, or our compact is ended!’ Monsieur, the ten years are passed, and to-night he stands again, as he stood then, at the parting of the ways.”

A flash, more brilliant than any that had yet shown, weltered and was gone. The dying soldier lifted his head quickly, with a fearful cry :

“ *Ne savoir à quel saint se vouer!* I saw him again—but now, before I fell, I saw the red man again, and he passed into the Emperor’s tent ! ”

The thunder followed on his word, with a rolling slam that shook the island.

“ Lebrun ! ” cried the young officer.  
“ Lebrun ! ”

The head was like a stone in his hands ; he peered down sickly ; the soul of the corporal had been shaken out of him with the crash.

And, even as de Sainte Croix rose, the storm broke, and under cover of it, and of the tearing wind and rain, began the first of those silent movements which were to precipitate the gathered hosts of the French upon the opposite shore—and victory.

A moment later the young man was back at his post, amid a shadowy flurry of

equerries and staff officers. All seemed confusion, but it was the kaleidoscopic agitation which falls into place and order. As he stood, the enemy's guns, startled into action, flashed deep and melancholy from the distant blackness, their roar mingling with the thunder's.

It was in an instant of quivering light that, looking down, he was aware of something strange and red standing by his side. It might have been a child, a dwarf, a cuirassier's scarlet cloak, grotesquely alive. In the momentary blinding darkness which followed it was lost to him. He heard, as his eyes recovered their focus, a measured voice speaking close by :

“ I think we have them, M. de Sainte Croix, since I have resolved to renew my compact with Destiny.”

He started violently, saluted instinctively. It was the Emperor himself.

“ By God's favour, sire,” he said.

“ Precisely,” said the Emperor dryly, and walked away.

## Leonardo da Vinci

“**I**CANNOT read the truth into these eyes. Their riddle still eludes me.”

When the passion of two natures meets in perfect reciprocity the resulting fruit is genius. It is procreation in the divine sense—divine creation by deputy, that is to say—whereby the love that is in the souls of both, each for the other, blossoms in the flawless understanding. Leonardo, the glorious bastard, was the earnest of such a meeting—a moment rarely possible, but still possible to any union—and the seal of its creative ecstasy was on his hand and on his brow. He was beautiful as he was inspired; yet, even as the Fates keep secrets from the gods themselves, from him was withheld the full interpretation of his own transcendent visions.

The young man to whom he spoke, and into whose eyes he had turned to look, lowered his lids as if abashed or aggrieved, and just perceptibly shrugged his shoulders.

“Master,” he said, presuming on the Master’s tolerance, “is it not the mystery

of original sin in them which baffles you ? And where on this earth are eyes to lack that riddle ? You are too old, Master, by near fifteen hundred years to find the model you seek. There was never but one in all the world.”

He looked up suddenly, an odd shadow of challenge or defiance in those same vilified orbs, and again veiled them under drooped lashes.

Messer Leonardo stood musing, half abstracted. He was wont to hunt for the faces for his pictures about the city, and when he marked a quarry, to pursue it in and out of the human warren like a weasel, tasting its life in anticipation, until the moment came to seize and drain it. So had he captured the model for his Christ—among the people, as was meet—Lucio, the widow’s son, who had a face like an angel’s, and the gift, it seemed, of immortal youth. Lucio’s mother was the poorest of the poor, and bedridden at that ; yet the fond pride in her kept her grown child in idleness. She embroidered rich cloths for tailors, and made a sufficient pittance ; but him she would never let soil his lovely hands in menial service. It had been a different thing, however, when Messer Leonardo, the Duke’s own petted protégé, had pro-

posed to introduce Lucio into the great picture of the Last Supper he was about to paint for the monks of Santa Maria delle Grazie. And as its divine protagonist ! Here was service deliriously sanctified. Lucio must be enraptured to consecrate his young glowing beauty to an end so sublime. And he went, indeed, to the great Master's atelier in the Palace, and was made the subject of innumerable studies, pending his appearance in the fresco.

The fresco itself was to be painted on an end wall of the monastery refectory, continuing in perspective the actual rafters of the room, and so far consisted in no more than a charcoal drawing, masterly outlining the group assembled at the consecration. Only the Christ Himself bloomed in flowery suggestion from the midmost throng, a figure iridescent, half revealed, as if it were verily a dream materialising.

Before this figure da Vinci, tall, comely, a rapt look on his beardless, keen-cut features, the solemnity of the riddle in his eyes, stood one morning, his forefinger to his lip, and pondered—pondered. His model for the Christ stood at his shoulder.

“ Ho, Lucio ! ” he said suddenly, like a man awakening ; “ you suggest it is thus ;

and perhaps it is thus. How, then, to elude the riddle which eludes me ? ”

“ Why not paint me so, Master, with my lids down ? ”

Leonardo glanced quickly at the speaker ; then, raising his left hand with the brushes and the pallet in it, selected here and there and began to work. Presently, as he modelled with deft fingers, half-murmured fragments of speech came from him.

“ What is thine age, Lucio ? I forget.”

“ Yet under twenty-five, Master.”

“ Why, a miracle, Lucio ! The bloom of thee ; the round chin of thee ; the golden dusky wings of thy hair ! What ensures such youth in manhood ? Innocence ? A mother’s love ? Art thou very innocent, Lucio ? ”

“ Who can be wholly innocent, Master, with the stain of that original sin in him ? ”

“ True. Yet, for all that, a good son, a pious son. Show me thine eyes again. Ah, the shy revealing ! Art afraid it will out—the answer to the riddle ? ”

“ No, Master.”

“ Once more, then. There ! Now keep them so.”

Presently he spoke again :

“ Your poor mother, Lucio—she mends ? ”

“ She mends a little, Messer.”

“ All due to the reliquary, is it not ? Tell me the true story.”

“ The story, Messer ! ”

“ Saints, what a gasp ! Yes, the story, Lucio. I had heard a whisper of it—how a dream came to the bedridden woman, down by the Volta gate, promising her she should recover if she would make gift to the Sanctuary of the Holy Virgin at Saronno of that possession which, next to her son, she held in all the world most dear. You know what thing that was—a little gold and crystal reliquary, empty of all save her child’s and her husband’s hair ; you know—or doth the story lie ? It relates at least of how the woman called her son to her, and yielded to him that treasure from its hiding-place, and bade him by his love of her do with it what he would. He did not hesitate, the good son who owed his mother all in all, but straightway he went his pilgrimage, fifteen miles thither and fifteen back, through perils and much hunger, and left his reliquary at the shrine, and won his guerdon. Well won, I say. He owed her all, and what he could pay he paid. There ends the story—and she mends, you say ? ”

“ Faith is the great physician, Messer.”

“ Well, God be thanked for it. I think it is.”

He looked round again quickly, then wrought on, while a long silence ensued. Presently, with an exclamation, he threw down his brushes.

“ The stain ! ” he said. “ What folly ! It confounds the issue. I shall not find my Christ ! ”

He dismissed his model, and returned to the ducal Palace. On his way he encountered a birdseller ; a number of wee songsters imprisoned in a yoke of netted sieves hung over his shoulders. He paid the man for all, cut the strings, and released the pretty flock. A wide-eyed child, his moist lips parted in an eager smile, watched the quivering escape heavenwards.

“ There stands my Christ,” thought the artist. “ For the moment his small soul is free, free from the world, free from the shadow of the Fall, mounting with the happy little birds all mirrored in his eyes.”

From that day he set aside the divine problem, and confined his labours to the grosser figures of his group. He worked, forgetting his former model, and Lucio, the ideal of guileless manhood, passed into the mist of half-remembered things.

Messer Leonardo was a very great man. His genius was as multifarious as it was gigantic ; but of its very nature it confessed

a flaw. One vast conception in him pushed out another, so that the last was for ever claiming precedence over all before. His mind was a great hall thronged with uncompleted Titans. A scheme once realised, the way pointed out, he was impatient of its mere achievement. No supreme creator ever left so many immortal works unfinished —the varnishing and the sand-papering, so to speak, were matters for lesser souls.

Of these, perhaps, was the Prior of Santa Maria delle Grazie, the aged Padre Bandelli. He “kicked” over the intolerable tardiness of the artist; years rolled by—five years, ten years, and more—and still the fresco was not done. At length all was finished saving only two heads, those of the betrayer and the Betrayed, the opposite poles of darkness and glory; and there once more, and finally it seemed, the composition halted. Bandelli protested, grew wroth, complained at last to the Duke himself. Leonardo responded with a demand for models—the one wholly guiltless of original sin, the other—Judas. Of the latter he lived in hopes; if he could find him, he might help him to the former, as the deepest darkness of a well betrays the stars above; if he could not, he might use the Prior himself at a pinch. The Duke laughed, sided with his

favourite, and the Prior withdrew discomfited. More years went by.

At length one day, as he was strolling in the streets with Duke Ludovico, his Magnificence hanging familiarly on his arm, Leonardo looked up and saw his Judas. He was one of two criminals, being carted for their gibbeting, who went by at the moment. The rogues jogged in a tumbril, their arms spliced back, their teeth grinning without merriment. A monk, holding up a small crucifix and gabbling mechanically as he ogled the passing petticoats, faced them ; the executioner, brawny and impassive, sat before, chewing a fig ; a ragged *contadino* with straw in his shoes, leading a horse as dusty and threadbare as an old overbeaten carpet, shambled at the head. Leonardo exclaimed "At last!" and adding excitedly "Release unto me Barabbas!" halted the procession with a gesture. "Give me this man," he appealed to the Duke, "for my Judas. Eternal infamy shall be his in lieu of death."

It was a trifling gift ; Ludovico graciously, of his omnipotence, bestowed it. Leonardo begged permission to return to the Palace, and thence ascended to his atelier, that unclean hostage slinking at his heels. In the room he stood the creature up against

a wall and studied him. Low cupidity, bestial self-indulgence, sin at its meanest and rankest were struggling there, out of the abject terror of death, to reassert themselves. Squalid, fulsome, with battered evil face and wild eyes shadowed under hair, the tint and almost the texture of ruined thatch, the thing fawned on its preserver, and was repelled, and fawned again, but at a distance, and stood whimpering. And thenceforward Leonardo set himself to unravel the riddle of this monstrous life.

He wrought for many days ; and then gradually a strange awe began to assail him. There was something emerging from the darkness, a light, a vibration, which shook and confused his purpose. What was it ? A Judas—with the glimmer of some lost angel reappearing, faint and indefinite, in the backward abyssm of his eyes ! That would never do—or would it—perhaps the best of all ? He stayed his hand in amazement. The wonder grew, and with it some emotion, some reluctant sympathy with the debased thing—reciprocal, he somehow felt it to be.

And then one morning suddenly the creature spoke. It was in the refectory, whither he had been conveyed, that the

Master might consider him in his actual relation to the composition—whence, still flowered, faint and mystic, the unsolved riddle of the Christ—and his voice came in a moment like a breaking water :

“ He lied to Heaven and his mother, Messer ; he had never hung the little gold and crystal reliquary at the shrine of the Beata Virgine in Saronno ! ”

Leonardo started violently and faced round. He stood gazing rigid at the speaker, like one stricken by some mortal memory.

“ He was a hypocrite and a libertine,” cried the apparition, wildly striking its breast. “ He had never left Milan. He had hung the reliquary about the neck of a little evil courtesan of the Ghetto, and with it had bought of her the hour’s bliss he had long and greedily coveted. But his mother, believing him, was cured through her faith ; and, when she was restored, she herself made a pilgrimage of gratitude to the shrine, and she discovered what alone was to be found there—the killing truth. And thence she returned, the false life ebbing from her drop by drop, and, coming home, she read the confirmation in his eyes and she died of it. And you could not read it, Messer, as a mother came to ; but the riddle spoiled your Christ—as it need not

spoil your Judas. I am well portrayed at last—I am well."

He ceased, dropping his head; and Leonardo found his voice in a cry:

"Thou art Lucio!"

And the other muttered:

"Yes, I am Lucio, who came to thee for Christ and remain'st as Judas."

Then Leonardo said:

"He forgave them on the cross. As thou look'st towards Him whom in thine own image thou hast betrayed, so shalt thou find mercy, even thou. In Judas' eyes I find my Christ at last."

## Wu Taotsz, the Celestial Painter

IN his fortress-palace at Nankin sat the Emperor Shun-yuen. It was a torrid day of the year 750, and the Emperor was fretful. Surfeit of power, he was reflecting, did not spell content. On the contrary, like lesser surfeits, it discomposed. It was a natural paradox, perhaps, that his seeming so full should make life appear so empty. He could not, for all his omnipotence, both eat his cake and have it.

The Emperor drew his imperial yellow silk surtout querulously about him, and "wah'd" snappishly. What was wrong with everything? As the third or fourth of his dynasty—the Tang, now long matured in a peaceful despotism—he possessed the lordship of all the good that existed. And yet the good was not good enough—it was failing somehow to satisfy. And why? He wished, by the celestial dragon, that he could tell!

Shun-yuen, as the product and successor

of warriors, of their kin but not of their kind, was really, had he known it, in the throes of a new birth. There was represented in him at the moment the line of demarcation between the forces of the blood and of the intellect. He stood far enough away from the spirit which had enthroned his dynasty to have developed wholly in the ameliorating atmosphere of the peace which that spirit had won for itself ; and yet there survived in him a virility which vaguely aspired to new fields of conquest. Surely there was something yet to be gained from the world beside territory and power ; surely to be constituted Emperor of the Sun was not to be condemned to eternal stagnation in its glare ? The germ of unrecognised thoughts and aspirations moved in him like a wriggling indigestion.

Suddenly in some near corridor of the Palace there rose a sound of repressed but excited voices, awaking a sympathetic response in his own restlessness. He attributed the disturbance to the general agitation evoked by his condition, since any imperial distress was automatically reflected in the imperial household, which was constituted very much on the lines of a hive ; and it was with a thrill of interest, therefore, that he observed the entrance

and reverential approach of his Chamberlain Chung-chi, an official of the second rank of the opaque red button and the three peacock feathers in an agate tube.

“ Speak,” said the Emperor, ready to chastise for a disappointment, but longing for something novel.

Chung-chi, prostrating himself at the imperial feet, and bowing his forehead nine times to the floor, raised his fat face and obeyed :

“ Light of the day, and supreme effulgence, under One, of the entire universe, on whom once to gaze in thy quintessential splendour is to be condemned to perpetual blindness, know that there has been seized in the town a stranger capable of the impossible heresy of asserting that there is on the earth a power greater than the Emperor himself.”

Shun-yuen sat erect, a sudden excitement tingling in his veins.

“ Bring this slave before us,” he said, “ that we may face and wither him in his blasphemy.”

Chung-chi rose, backed from the presence, disappeared, and returned in a moment, ushering in a man under guard. The stranger, offering no obeisance, stood up calm and fearless before the Emperor.

He was a small man, and old ; yet the

age in him, certified by a thousand minute wrinkles, seemed somehow discounted by the glow of a couple of brown eyes, as glossy and visionary as a child's. His feet and ankles were bare; his short trousers and waistless blouse were of the ignoble butchers' blue; his hair was clipped close to his scalp—for in those days the Tartar imposition of the pigtail was not, nor had women yet adopted the decadent fashion of hoops. Over the stranger's shoulder hung an open wallet, stuffed with brushes and pigments.

"Thy name?" demanded the Emperor.

"I am called Wu Taotsz, the celestial painter," answered the stranger in a voice like a clear echo.

The Emperor's lip curled slightly. This was one of the despised crafts, as yet held in contempt. Even at that date, to shine in letters or learning was the surest road to distinction, which is worth recording of a people warlike enough in the eighth century, however their reputation for arms may have suffered since. A uniform did not with them excuse and glorify a multitude of inanities; the fighting man got his due and no more. But still, however the intellectual arts were respected, the art of painting had not come into its own.

"Thou bearest thy head high," said the Emperor. "Wilt thou remain celestial if we dock thee of it?"

He alluded to the common belief that to be deprived of one's head, the seat of understanding, was to be disgraced beyond acceptance in paradise.

"Aye, even then," answered the stranger. The Emperor stared.

"By what authority?" he cried.

"By the power of Imagination," said Wu Taotsz, "which is greater under God than all."

"Greater than I am?"

"Greater than thou, O Emperor!"

Shun-yuen gave a little gasp.

"Thou hast said it," he spake. "Who or what, then, is this Imagination?"

"It is that which penetrates and possesses even me, Wu Taotsz."

"Thee? Then it is thou who art greater than I?"

"It is I, by virtue of that power."

"What, then, can this Imagination do that I cannot do?"

"There is nothing which it cannot do, Shun-yuen. At its summons the world crawls prostrate at its feet; the Emperors bow their necks; wealth, beauty, power throng to worship it; nay, it can reach

down the starry bodies from the skies and weld them into a single sphere, as potters knead clay, incomparably stupendous. Ask me what it can do ! ”

The Emperor glanced about him. His eyes had suddenly assumed a perplexed and troubled look ; he shook his head slightly. The vague emotions and aspirations which had lately dejected him returned with redoubled force, and he thought, What is to seek here that this Imagination could perchance supply ?

Suddenly his face brightened, and when all thought he was about to condemn the presumptuous madman to most exquisite tortures, he smiled upon Wu Taotsz, and spoke :

“ Is it conceivable that in all these years we have not learned to honour lovely Peace with other than a fortress for her habitation ? Mine eyes are dim with dreams of things I cannot shape—gold walls, and tumbling waters, and shining birds, and the misty loom of turrets clouding a vast space. Can Imagination build me such a shrine for Peace ? ”

“ Aye, and more than thou dreamest,” answered the painter.

Shun-yuen rose. He bade the attendants honour Wu Taotsz, and minister to him, and give him all that he needed.

“ Only the bare wall of a quiet room, and much rice-water, and my paints and brushes,” said the stranger, his eyes gleaming.

And he was allotted such a room as he desired ; and, by his wish, none, not even the Emperor, came near him while he wrought. But every day Shun-yuen looked from his Palace windows upon the surrounding emptiness, and wondered when he was to see arise there the first evidences of the glorious fabric which Wu Taotsz was to build for him of his Imagination. And still every morning his soul was unsatisfied and the waste glared desolate.

Now in the meantime speculation was rife as to the stranger and his genesis. Some believed him to be a wizard embryo hatched from the sands of the great river ; others that he was the spirit of the kilns where they baked the earth Kaolin into the porcelain which, in its hues and forms of increasing beauty, was coming to express more and more day by day the creative genius of the age. But of all these surmises Wu Taotsz was unconscious, as he worked on alone in his empty room.

And at last one morning he sent for the Emperor.

Eagerly Shun-yuen, dispensing, for the

first time in his life, with forms and punctilio, hurried to obey the summons, and entered the room alone. And instantly he uttered a cry of rapture, and stood like one half stupefied. For there before him stood realised the pleasance of his dreams, only a thousand times transfigured.

He was gazing upon the clustered minarets of a palace such as his soul had never conceived, a fabric all builded of cloud and amber and foam, and yet as solid as the sward from which it sprang. There, in the midst of heavenly gardens which receded down terrace on terrace of loveliness to low hills and a blue horizon, the pearly structure sprang into a sky of lazulite ; and to the golden gates of the main pavilion a flight of marble steps ascended.

Rousing himself as if from a trance of ecstasy, the Emperor spake :

“ Who builded this, Wu Taotsz ? ”

“ Imagination,” was the answer.

“ Bid, then, Imagination to make the winds blow, the river sing, the birds warble.”

“ They are vocal to my ears, Shun-yuen, and beautiful are the forms within the house.”

At that moment a droning fly settled with a flop upon the golden gate. The

emperor started violently, and cried out, "A fly, and so far yet so plain!"

He hurried forward, peered closely, put out his hand and turned, with a scream of fury.

"Wretch! This is no more than a painted picture."

"To Imagination it is real," said Wu Taotsz.

The Emperor, his face orange with rage, leapt and drew his sword.

"Impostor," he shrieked, "let Imagination, so it can, preserve thee from my wrath."

He flew at the artist, who sped before him, across and round the room, until, reaching the foot of the painted steps, up the flight sprang Wu Taotsz, and, with a laugh, disappeared within the golden gates.

Following blindly in his anger, the Emperor rushed at the steps, staggered, recovered himself, gave a mortal gasp, and fell back. Before his eyes was just the blank wall of the room. The Palace and Wu Taotsz had vanished together.

## Cleopatra and the Decurion

ON the headland of Lochias, where it pushed towards the overlapping promontory of Pharos, stood the palace and gardens of the Ptolemies. The great lighthouse on the opposite shore glowed across the strait, and in the deep waters between were planted a number of islets, like gigantic stepping-stones, their intervals closed with booms and chains. These, and the arms of land, enclosed the harbour of Alexandria, all round whose mighty circumference the city flamed like a belt of fire, impassable, magnificent. It was thirty years before the birth of Christ, and the battle of Actium had been fought and, for all that it meant to Egypt and the world, lost. Cleopatra was doomed, and Magdalén, perhaps, conceived.

Mark Antony, desperate, though infatuated still, had come out of his retirement on Pharos, whither he had retreated to brood over his leman's treachery. The two were reconciled in a way, and sought

perpetually to drown in revelry the horror of an impending judgment. The beautiful queen, last expression of a monstrous demonism, its heir and epitome, had no instinct at the last but to gore the world that crushed her—to glut herself with blood and suffering. In these final days her inhumanity surpassed itself. And crowned Antony, glooming in his purple and diamonds, watched and was silent.

One night they sat at supper in the Palace, a fierce nucleus, where enthroned, to all the blazing splendour of the hall. It was so alight with torches that the marble columns on which those hung aloft looked, in their deep reflections in the pavement, as if they were rooted in hell fire. Not a sleek Nubian crossing the floor with a golden dish in his hands but had his "fellow in the cellarage" keeping step with him, like a devil reversed and busy in that under inferno. There were far faint cries in the air—of a doomed city, of some nearer anguish—punctuating the throb and swoon of harps. The swaying of peacock fans in soft undulating arms stirred the floating incense, lest the rank breath of torture should enter and overpower it. There was not a man or woman there whose heart, for all the sensuous glamour, was void of fear—unless

it were, perhaps, the Decurion Dentatus. He was young, cold, beautiful as Antinous—a Graeco-Roman of the heroic type—and he loved his master Antony.

A Hebe, sweet in years and looks, filled the wine cups of the King and Queen. Antony, lifting his, hesitated on the draught. His eyes, already inflamed, sought his partner's, half covertly, half challengingly. Cleopatra laughed, and putting her glass to her full lips, drank. She followed a formula in doing so, conceding it agreeably to the very madness of his passion. He was haunted, since his defeat, with the thought that she would poison him to save herself. And yet he loved her. It was not the first or the last time in the history of worship that the supreme egotism had evoked the supreme adoration.

Presently, amidst some amorous fondlings, the Queen took the lily chaplet from her hair and shredded a petal or two from it into her lord's wine.

“Do you the same by mine, my soul,” she whispered, “and let us drink the very perfume of each other's wit.”

His eyes burning, he lifted the wreath from his brow and obeyed, dropping a flower into her cup. As he raised his own to drink, she stopped him, coaxed the vessel

from his hand, and calling the little Hebe to her, bade her take it.

“Thou art fair,” she said. “My lord pledges thee. Drink to his passing fancy.”

Like one of those woodland growths which, being torn, flush a faint, slow sapphire through all their tender flesh, the child’s face, as she stood, seemed to sicken to the hue of death. She shuddered; her limbs began to fail her.

“Drink!” said Cleopatra, rising in her place with a smile. “Drink, child—for thine own sake.”

Better swift death than nameless torture. The poor slave drained the cup, and, casting it, with a scream, from her, dropped upon the pavement, a glittering, voluble shadow, writhing to its own reflection.

Antony had risen, the company with him—speechless all, breathing out the long minutes of the tragedy. It amounted to no more than this, that the child had been so young and lovely—and that now she was spoiled.

At the end, the Queen, scornful, magnificent, turned her burning eyes on her lover’s face. There was a look in its ruined strength which made her pause a moment.

“Read there, sweet lord,” she said, “the groundlessness, the unworthiness of

thy suspicions. Were my love false, what precautions of thine could avail against my wit and will to end thee?"

He turned, still without a word, and, the light glinting a moment on his grizzling hair and fuddled, frowning cyes, passed from the banquet.

Then, coming down into the hall, Cleopatra, with a wave of her hand, dismissed the company, the slaves, the musicians—all without exception, save the Decurion Dentatus, whom she called to her.

Under the blazing lights the two stood together, and the body of the dead girl lay at their feet. The Queen pointed to it. Her arm and hand were of faultless beauty. She was thirty-eight, but with all the bloom and fullness of just-ripened womanhood. Years had not set one streak of alloy in the treasure of her golden hair, or clouded the azure of her eyes, or done more than perfect in her the natural weapons of the sorceress. She might have been the Decurion's sister, so like he was to her in grace and Grecian fairness.

She fixed him with her eyes.

"I marked thee, Decurion," she said—"and not for the first time. Thy looks defied me, thine eyes condemned. What—did you dare! And thy lip curled when

Antony yielded me the cup. Answer why,  
so thou wouldest not——”

He stayed her fearlessly :

“ Because I love him.”

“ What, then ? ” she said, wondering.

“ Could he not see, as we all saw,” he answered, “ that thou hadst poisoned it ? For his wit’s sake I would have had him comprehend ; for his nobility’s sake I would have had him refuse thee the cup ; for his soul’s sake I would have had him drink from it himself, and die, and be free.”

“ Free ? From what ? ”

“ From his thrall.”

“ What callest thou that ? ”

“ The Curse of Antony.”

“ Meaning Cleopatra ? ”

“ Meaning thee, O Queen ! ”

She laughed. She did not strike his mouth, as was her first mad impulse.

“ Darest thou ? ” she breathed again ; then stared into his eyes in pure amazement. Was he not the first man who had ever spoken to her thus ?

“ Well, thou lovest him,” she said presently, with a deep sigh—“ and I, too, in my poor way. It shall be a contest of loves between us.”

She gazed a moment unmoved on the little distorted body at her feet, glanced

mockingly at the Decurion, and, turning, left him lost in wonderment.

He never saw her again until near the end. She was occupied in the meanwhile in building herself an unsurpassable mausoleum, and in testing on the bodies of slaves the effects of various poisons. Foreseeing the worst, and prepared for it, she would yet woo Death like a voluptuary, and borrow rapture of his embrace. Yet so far the test had failed her ; and not from any inhumanity ; for indeed she would have kissed in ecstasy that slave who suffered nothing in obliging her. But one and all they would persist most perversely in dying in extreme agony.

And then one day she sent for the Decurion Dentatus, who, in the thick of the general treachery, was among the few noble who stood by their leader. It was when Octavius was at Pelusium, and the fate of Alexandria appeared sealed.

The soldier was brought in to the Queen where she lay in a private chamber of her Palace. Two faithful women attended upon their mistress ; an enamelled casket lying on a table near by was half buried under scented blossoms. Cleopatra fanned herself languidly ; a luminous green scarab burned on her forehead between the wings of golden

hair ; the gauzy film which enwrapped her deepened to a tender flush over hips and bosom. Yet in her eyes some shadow of a mortal fear belied the sensuous abandonment of her attitude.

“ The contest of our loves, Decurion,” she said. “ Art thou prepared to wage it ? ”

He looked at her steadfastly, and answered, “ Yes, Queen.”

“ To free thy master,” she said, “ from this curse ? Wilt thou teach me how to die ? ”

“ Aye, gladly,” he said.

She pointed to the casket. “ It lies therein—the means. Open and handle it. It is said its sting benumbs—puts Death asleep. So thou diest sweetly, I am thy slave and grave-fellow.”

Without a moment’s hesitation, he strode to the casket, and unfastened and raised the lid. Within, upon a mat of green leaves, lay coiled a thick emblazoned worm, all bronzed and gold—a poisonous horned viper. He grasped and held it aloft ; received the stabbing tooth, once, twice, in his arm ; flung the reptile back into its box and closed the lid.

After long waiting, he was down upon his knees, pallid but triumphant.

“ Sufferest thou ? ” she demanded.

"But too much bliss," he answered faintly. "I swoon from it."

He crawled towards her, but sank on the way and died, forcing a smile to his agonised lips.

Then, when it was over, she rose in great emotion, and looked down upon the body.

"I have conquered all others," she said. "Thou conquerest me. Greater than mine is thy love." She turned to her trembling women. "Keep the worm safe." And then she kneeled and, bending, kissed the dead man's lips. "Take me for thy slave, Dentatus," she whispered, "in the shadows to come. Not Antony, not another, but thou alone."

## The Galilean

**A**SOLITARY goatherd sat crouched on a slope above the Sea of Galilee. It was approaching morning, and he had lit a little fire on the rocks in order to roast his breakfast of fish. It was still dark, though the embroidered velvet canopy overhead was beginning to reveal a grape-like bloom along its eastern verge. Seven miles across, on the opposite shore, the lamps of Tiberias, minute and liquid, dripped threads of gold into the motionless lake ; to the north the snows of Mount Hermon lay like a pillow to the quiet hills ; everywhere was the swoon and stillness which characterise that last deep hour of slumber when sleep itself sleeps.

The smoke of the goatherd's fire rose in a thin, unbroken shaft ; the hiss and explosion of its thorns were uttered in a subdued voice ; he himself sat like a figure carved in old ivory. His arms and legs were bare ; his only garment was a tunic of brown sackcloth ; he was the gauntest man of his race in all Galilee. He suggested some

grotesque vulturine fledgling rather than a human being, in his leathery skin, denuded scalp, prominent eyes, and great horny beak of a nose. Whatever juice there was in him must have been as brown and acrid as a walnut's.

He had laid his sticks upon a little ledge or plateau where the green of the banks, rising some fifty feet or so from the margin of the lake, first strayed to lose itself among the waste and tumble of the sandstone heights above. Scattered among the bents and yellow boulders from which he had descended lay his silent flock. He was the only soul awake, it seemed, in all that heaped-up solitude.

Suddenly he raised his head. The sound of a footstep, distant at first, but regularly approaching, penetrated to his ears. It fell low and loud, unmistakably human, until it resolved itself into the tramp of a worried man coming over the hills from the south. The goatherd was not interested or concerned. He sat apathetic, even when the traveller, appearing round a bend of the rocks, walked grunting into the firelight and revealed himself a Roman soldier.

The new-comer had a heavy, colourless face with thick black eyebrows. The close chin-piece of his small cap-like helmet gave

his lower jaw a bulldog look. His body to the hips was cased in a laminated cuirass of brass, epaulets of which covered his shoulders, and his short tunic was garnished with hanging straps of leather plated with strips of the same metal. Skin-tight drawers descended to the middle of his calves, and were succeeded by puttees of pliant felt, which ended in military caligæ with spiked soles. A short, double-edged sword hung in a sheath at his right side, and in his hand he carried a javelin of about his own height, the shaft of which had served him for a staff. Weary and benighted as he appeared to be, his speech and bearing expressed the arrogance of the dominant race.

“Ho !” he said, “ho !” and stretched himself relieved. “Food and fire, and a respite at least from this cursed chase. What lights are yon across the lake, goatherd ?”

“Tiberias.”

It might have been an automaton speaking. The soldier swore by all his gods.

“Eighty miles from Jerusalem—a land of rogues and fools ! Now directed this way, now that, mountains where I was told valleys, and torrents for fords, and to find at last that I have taken the wrong bank !

Harkee, thou wooden Satyrus : my horse fell foundered among the hills, and I saw thy fire and made for it on foot. Well, I carry dispatches for thy Tetrarch, and thou tellest me that is Tiberias yonder. Should I not do well to beat thee for it ? ”

The large eyes of the goatherd conned the speaker immovably.

“ Tiberias,” he repeated. And then he added, “ With dawn will come the fishermen.”

The soldier cursed : “ What, calf ! ” and checked himself. “ Thou meanest,” he said, “ a boat to carry me across ? ” He heaved out a sigh. “ Well, goatherd, so be it ; and while I wait I starve. Dost thou not hunger too ? ”

“ Aye,” said the goatherd, “ always and for ever.”

The fish were spluttering on the embers. The soldier speared one with his javelin, and, blowing on it, began to eat unceremoniously.

“ I would not concede so much to *my* Fates,” he said. “ I would rob sooner. Besides, here is proof plenty that you lie, old goatherd.”

The goatherd bent forward, and prodded the speaker once with a finger like a crooked stick.

“ How old wouldest call me ? ” he said.

“ A hundred.”

“ I am seven-and-twenty, Roman.”

The soldier laughed and stared.

“ Bearest thy years ill. Since when beganst to age ? ”

“ Since I began to starve.”

“ And when was that ? ”

“ When one said to me, ‘ Feed on the illusions of the flesh until I come again.’ ”

“ One—one ? What one ? ”

“ A strange white man. They called him Jesus of Nazareth about here.”

The soldier, his cheek bulged with fish, stopped masticating a moment to stare, then burst into a hoarse laugh.

“ Ho, ho ! my friend ! Art in a sorry case indeed ! Thou shalt starve and starve, by Cæsar. Tell me the story, goatherd.”

The gaunt creature mused a little.

“ Why, there is none, Roman, but just this. I had heard of him and scoffed—I, a practical man—and one day (it was many seasons back) he came across the water to these hills, and a great multitude followed and gathered to him from all sides. And they brought with them a number that were maimed and sick, and the man touched them and they appeared healed, rising and blessing his name, so that I, though counting

it an illusion of the spirit, could not but marvel in his magic and the people's blindness. Now the crowd abode here into the third day, and they felt neither thirst nor hunger ; but I, that durst not leave my flock, waiting for them to go, was like a ravenous wolf. And on the third day this Jesus called for food to give to his followers, and some that were his went down to the boat, and I with them. And, lo ! there were but a few loaves and fishes—nothing at all for such a multitude. But I helped to carry these up, and on the way the largest fish of all I hid beneath my tunic, for I thought, 'Great he may be, but nothing is lost that I take precautions against his failure to assuage my hunger.' Then did he bid us all to sit upon the ground, and he blessed and brake the fish and bread ; and so it happened—account it to what you will—for every soul there was a meal and to spare. But when it came to my turn he would give me none ; only, gazing on me, he bade me, since faith I had not, to feed on the illusions of the flesh until he came again. And I laughed to myself, thinking of the fish ; but, Roman, that fish when I came to devour it was like a shadow in the water, having form but no substance, and so it is with all food to me since. Though I behold it,

handle it, I put a shadow to my lips. Yet every day do I prepare my meal, hoping the curse removed, and knowing always it shall not be until he come again."

The soldier broke into a roar of laughter.

"Until he come again!" he cried, "until he come again! O, a jockeyed Jew, a poor deluded Jew!"

He was so gloriously tickled that he had to gasp and choke himself into sobriety.

"Harkee, goatherd," he said presently; "there was a day, not long past, in Jerusalem—a lamentable day for thee. It thundered—gods, how it thundered, rattling the Place of Skulls! I ought to remember, seeing I was on duty there. Nazareth was it, now? Why, to be sure—I know my letters, and it was writ plain enough and high enough. Jesus of Nazareth, who saved others, but could not save himself—that was it—one of three rogues condemned. Well, he laid an embargo on thee, did he? You see this spear——"

He paused, in the very act of lifting his javelin, and sat staring stupidly at it. Its point was tipped with crimson.

"The rising sun!" muttered the goat-herd, and, getting suddenly to his feet, stood gazing seawards. The soldier came and stood beside him.

The whole wide valley, while they spoke, had opened to the morning like a rose, the clustered hills its petals, its calyx the deep lake, the lights upon it dewdrops shining at its heart. And there upon the dim waters, swinging close inshore, was a fisherman's boat, its crew gathering in an empty net.

Now the two on the hill stood too remote to distinguish sounds or faces, while the conformation of the rocks hid the shore from their view. But of a sudden, as they looked, the forms in the boat started erect, and, all standing in a huddled group, appeared to gaze landwards. And instantly, as if they had received therefrom some direction, they seized and cast their net the other side of the boat and drew on it, and the watchers saw by their straining muscles that the net was full. Perceiving which, one of the fishermen, a burly fellow, quitted his hold of the cords, and, leaping into the water, floundered for the shore and disappeared.

“What now?” said the soldier. “Do they spy and seek us?” He muttered vacantly, and glanced again at his spear-head, and shook the haft impatiently. But the sunrise would not be detached from it.

Now the goatherd ran to a cleft which

commanded the shore below, and, glaring a moment, returned swiftly, his face alight.

“ Rabboni,” he said excitedly, “ it is the man of Nazareth himself come back, and he ascendeth the hill towards us, and the spell will be removed from me so that I shall taste fish once more.”

But the words were hardly out of his mouth when the soldier seized his arm, and, dragging him to the shelter of a great boulder at a distance, forced him to crouch with him behind it, so that they might see without being seen. And so hidden, they were aware of a shape that came into the firelight, and it was white like a spirit of the hills and waters, and it stretched its hands above the embers, so that they leaped again.

And the goatherd heard the soldier mutter in his ear :

“ A practical man—you say you are a practical man ! Now, who is it ? ”

“ Jesus of Nazareth,” he answered.

But the soldier looked at his javelin and it ran with sunrise.

“ That cannot be,” he said, “ for seven days ago I opened his side with this spear as he hung upon the cross, and there is the blood to testify to it.”

“ I know nothing about that,” said the

goatherd ; " my palate is sufficient evidence for me. Look where they come and lay their fish upon my embers. The very savour of their cooking tells me I can taste again. It is Jesus, sure enough ! "

THE END

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